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A VOLUME OF VERSE

BY

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

AUTHOR OF
'MANY MOODS' 'RENAISSANCE IN ITALY' 'STUDIES OF GREEK POETS'
ETC.

'The song is to the singer, and comes back most to him'

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE
1880

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TO MY FRIEND

AMELIA BETHAM EDWARDS

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

Davos Platz
March 1 80

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LYRICS OF LIFE AND ART.

PART I.

ACCENTUAL SAPPHICS.

When like dawn our Lady of Love, the deathless,
Rose from waves that whisper around Cythera,
She with both hands gave to the race of mortals
Joy for a guerdon.

Stretching arms ambrosial, she divided
All her realm of beauty to be partaken ;
This way marriage, help, and the hope of children
Born in the homestead.

Then she bent dim eyes of diviner yearning
That way o'er foam-fretted and eager ocean,
Till from darkness, yea and the earth's foundations,
Came a green island.

Ringed with uncontrollable storms that threaten
Ringed with envious shoals and a tide rebellious,
Fair it sleeps, and sirens around it alway
Sing to the sunlight.

Here the goddess set for the souls of poets
Their abiding place to be won with danger,
Where for aye, unshaken and uncorrupted,
Shines the ideal.

TWO MOODS OF THE MIND.

O SAD and strange this aching mood
Of souls that yearn in solitude :
O wild and terrible this fire
That frets the brain with blind desire,
Bidding me rise before the morn
With sleepless eyes and heart forlorn,
Driving me forth at noon or night
To chase an unattained delight.
I cannot rest, for still one thought
Pursues my spirit fever-fraught;
And what it is I scarce could say,
Although it haunts me night and day.
I sought to soothe this ache with song,
But singing made my soul's thirst strong.
I strove to quench it by the strength
Of study ; but I tired at length
Of seeking, learning, finding nought.
I tried to think, but all my thought
Still brought me to the goal whereof
The crown I could not seize was love.
Now at the last I know my fate,
To weave, though worn and desolate,
For other men a woof of light
And hope and knowledge infinite.

Artists have nought to seek or hold
Of mirth or perishable gold.
For them love is not love, nor bliss
A darling thing to clasp and kiss :
But in their poverty and want
Lies wealth whereof the world is scant.

While thus I mused, upon my soul there fell,
Like the deep booming of a distant bell,
A voice that gathered volume, cried, and said :
'Ungrateful and oblivious of the dead !
Hast thou forgotten all thy friends so dear,
Painter and bard, sculptor and sage and seer,
Who lived and wrought and suffered and have won,
In hearts that beat, a place beyond the sun ?
Is it so little to be named among
The least and lowliest of that radiant throng,
That thou must needs with fainting soul and nerve
Enfeebled by mere longing cease to serve ?
Up, gird thy loins : lo, the break of day !
The stars are swallowed, Night is whirled away !'
Then on mine eyes, where tears had swum before,
There flashed the vision of a radiant shore,
Embowered with laurels to the laughing seas,
And thronged with loves and living melodies,
Where-through I wandered, and each grief of mine
Became a joy immortal and divine :
I gathered fruits, and on my brows were set
Unfading flowers with dews of Lethe wet ;

And youths that smiled and men that loved flew by,
And not a tear was seen in any eye ;
Yea, not one longing of my soul remained
Unsatisfied, unslaked, or unattained ;
For this fair region of perpetual good
Was the dreamland of art's beatitude.

LOVE IN DREAMS.

Love hath his poppy-wreath,
Not Night alone.
I laid my head beneath
Love's lilied throne :
Then to my sleep he brought
This anodyne—
The flower of many a thought
And fancy fine :
A form, a face, no more;
Fairer than truth;
A dream from death's pale shore;
The soul of youth:
A dream so dear, so deep,
All dreams above,
That still I pray to sleep—
Bring Love back, Love !

ICH HOR' ES SOGAR IM TRAUM.

Sing on, sing on : half dreaming still
I hear you singing, down the hill,
Through the greenwood, beside the rill.

Each to the other sing, sweet birds ;
Make music sweeter far than words ;
Drown my still soul with song, dear birds.

Under each starbeam there was sleep ;
Far down the river wandered deep ;
The woods closed round it still and steep.

One watch-dog from the lone farm bayed ;
The waterfowl beneath the shade
Of sedge and flowering reed were laid.

The birds sang on, and slumber shed
Like silver clouds upon my head ;
I slept, nor stirred me in my bed.

Into my room he seemed to glide ;
The moonbeams through the window wide
Snowed in upon my white bedside.

He kissed my lips, he kissed my cheek ;
I could not kiss him back nor speak :
I feared the blissful sleep to break.

Sing louder, nightingales of May !
Sing, dash my golden dream away !
Sing anthems to the orient day !

The moonlight pales ; the grey cock crows ;
A murmur in the tree top goes ;
Sleep sheds her petals like a rose.

TO ONE IN HEAVEN.

The earth is new—it was thy love
That made her new ;
The heavens are new—it was thy love
That made them new.

Now thou art gone, while I alone
Am left to face
The wonder of a world unknown,
A strange blank space.

What right had Death 'twixt me and thee
His scythe to sway ?
He cannot teach the soul of me
A surer way.

I want thee. Faith, hope, love are changed ;
And I am weak :
Old paths wherein my spirit ranged,
I blindly seek.

Yet, friend, though thou art gone, through thee
Mid all this new
Maze of dim thought, dark mystery,
I'll find the clue !

FORGET ME NEVER.

Of our great love, Parthenophil,
This little stone abideth still
Sole sign and token :
I seek thee yet, and yet shall seek,
Though faint mine eyes, my spirit weak
With prayers unspoken.

Meanwhile, best friend of friends, do thou,
If this the cruel fates allow
By death's dark river,
Among those shadowy people, drink
No drop for me on Lethe's brink :
Forget me never !

ON THE HILL-SIDE.

THE winds behind me in the thicket sigh,
The bees fly droning on laborious wing,
Pink cloudlets scarcely float across the sky,
September stillness broods o'er everything.
Deep peace is in my soul: I seem to hear
Catullus murmuring 'Let us live and love;
Suns rise and set and fill the rolling year
Which bears us deathward, therefore let us love;
Pour forth the wine of kisses, let them flow,
And let us drink our fill before we die.'
Hush! in the thicket still the breezes blow;
Pink cloudlets sail across the azure sky;
The bees warp lazily on laden wing;
Beauty and stillness brood o'er everything.

NEW LIFE, NEW LOVE.

APRIL is in:
New loves begin!
Up, lovers all,
The cuckoos call!

Winter is by,
Blue shines the sky,
Primroses blow
Where lay cold snow:
Then why should I
Sit still and sigh?

Death took my dear:
Oh pain, oh fear!
I know not whither,
When flowers did wither,
My summer love
Flew far above.

Now must I find
One to my mind:
The world is wide;
Spring fields are pied
With flowers for thee,
New love, and me!

April is in:
New loves begin!
Up, lovers all,
The cuckoos call!

FOUR PICTURES BY BURNE JONES.

FORTUNE.

Captains and kings are fastened to her wheel,
Which turns and turns: while she, close-veiled and blind,
Thrusts her lean arm athwart them: head neath heel,
And heel on head, they gasp and groan, entwined,
A wreath of woe no mercy may unbind:
For God who all things made, to Fortune gives
Power to subdue the mightiest man that lives.

FAME.

Fame stands and blows a trumpet. Chest and thigh,
Strained with the blast, like knotted cordage quiver.
Whence hath he flown? From what empyrean sky
Have those wings borne him, fiery-bright, that shiver
Like burning towers reflected in a river?
Behold! Behind him Fortune and her wheel
Lie prone and shattered neath a naked heel.

OBLIVION.

Thou too art strong and eagle-winged: but oh!
How pale as death is yon broad bosom, bent

Over the restless scythe, that to and fro
Sweeps, while the mower, on his task intent,
Looks not to left or right. Mangled and rent
Are Fame's fair wings; like Fortune's wheel, his horn
Was but a plaything for Oblivion's scorn.

LOVE.

Ah Love! And thou hast slain him? With what charm,
Scattering rose-leaves on that stubborn scythe,
Hast thou avenged the world of so much harm?
Oblivion neath thy smile hath ceased to writhe.
How wert thou bold, oh, tender-limbed and lithe—
Mere rosy-pinioned stripling—to assail
Him before whom Fame, Fortune's lord, must quail?

DIC MIHI QUID FECI, NISI NON SAPIENTER AMAVI?

A PICTURE BY BURNE JONES.

SHE leans with yearning from the enamoured tree,
While passionate petals, shaken by her strain,
From the frail boughs around her whiteness rain.
Pearling with shells of rose the dewy lea:
But he who walks thereunder, with what pain
He feels these sudden arms enthrallingly
Wound round his wistful heart, and knows that she

Clasps him once more, never to clasp again !
O Love relentless ; wherefore wilt thou wring
This bitter-sweet of souls from their embrace ?
Might she not bloom like other trees and fling
Her tearless petals in a tranquil place,
Nor thrust the pallid anguish of her face
Forth to his face for fruitless sorrowing ?

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.

Save us, dear lord ; for, lo, our house is waste
With what long strain of inexpressible woe !
Her pure and lightsome chambers are defaced :
Thorned cankers in her goodly gardens blow ;
And the fair carven chapter lieth low.
Pride, sweetness, splendour, all delights of life,
Have vanished in the one grim sickening strife.

Yet save us, lord ! for should thy feet still fall
Upon the broken pavement, flowers would spring :
Should thy voice through the midday darkness call,
Music would wake and wave her aery wing :
Shouldst thou but smile, we once again might sing,
And, though we may not build, at least no more
Break what remains of this thy house of yore.

SPRING.

WHITE as peeled willow-wands ableach in May
Are all her vestments, and her face is frail
As wavering wind-flowers or the scented spray
Of wild hedge-roses : on her head the pail
Foams with fresh milk ; and tufts of galingale,
With cowslips mingled and the pensive hue
Of bluebells, neath her footing shed their dew.

Singing she wends ; nor thought nor shade of care
Dwells on her forehead ; for the year is young :
Black winter dies ; and in the tranquil air
The promise of spring flowers, and carols sung
By nightingales, and the glad cuckoo's tongue,
Proclaim new life, and lengthening days, and nights
Shortened to serve for sleepless Love's delights.

SUMMER.

O SWEET and strange what time grey morning steals
Over the misty flats, and gently stirs
Bee-laden limes and pendulous abeles,
To brush the dew-bespangled gossamers
From meadow grasses, and beneath black firs
In limpid streamlets or translucent lakes
To bathe amid dim heron-haunted brakes !

O sweet and sumptuous at height of noon
Languid to lie on scented summer-lawns,
Fanned by faint breezes of the breathless June ;
To watch the timorous and trooping fawns,
Dappled like tenderest clouds in early dawns,
Forth from their ferny covert glide to drink
And cool lithe limbs beside the river's brink !

O strange and sad ere daylight disappears,
To hear the creaking of the homeward wain,
Drawn by its yoke of tardy-pacing steers,
Neath honeysuckle hedge and tangled lane ;
To breathe faint scent of roses on the wane
By cottage doors, and watch the mellowing sky
Fade into saffron hues insensibly !

HARVEST.

The west is purple, and a golden globe,
Sphered with new-risen moonlight, hangs between
The skirts of evening's amethystine robe
And the round world bathed in the steady sheen.
There bending o'er a sickle bright and keen,
Rests from his long day's labour one whose eyes
Are fixed upon the large and luminous skies :

An earnest man he seems with yellow hair,
And yellow neath his scythe-sweep are the sheaves ;
Much need hath he to waste the nights with care,
Lest waking he should hear from dripping eaves
The plash of rain, or hail among thin leaves,
Or melancholy wailings of a wind,
That lays broad field and furrow waste behind :

Much need hath he the live-long day to toil,
Sweeping the golden granaries of the plain,
Until he garner all the summer's spoil,
And store his gaping barns with heavy grain ;
Then will he sleep, nor heed the plash of rain,
But with gay wassail and glad winter cheer
Steel a stout heart against the coming year.

LINES WRITTEN INSIDE A COPY OF PARADISE LOST.

Ploughing the trough of the salt sun-dimpled Ionian billows,
Under Parnassian peaks and Arcady's own Erymanthus ;
Lying limb-length on the hills mid thyme and innocent eyebright,
While overhead blue heaven was bowed like a dome on the mountain ;

Through resounding pines and the roar of cataracts raging
Down black beetled crags where winds incessantly wrangle ;
Thee have I read, little book, and found in thy pages the music,
Multitudinous, mighty, outpoured from the organ of Milton,
Matching the waves in their breadth, and the hills in their strength, and the pinewoods
Voiced with a thousand winds, and the wild waterfalls in their volume.

ANY SCULPTOR TO ANY MODEL.

I KNOW not anything more fair than thou.—
God give me strength to feel thee, power to speak
Through this dumb clay and marble all the thoughts
That rise within my spirit while I gaze !—
What saith the Scripture ? In His image God
Shaped man, and breathed into his nostrils breath
Of life.—Here then, as nowhere else, shines God ;
The Thought made flesh, the world's soul breathing soft
And strong, not merely through those lips and eyes,
But in each flawless limb, each mighty curve,
Each sinew moulded on the moving form.
Until thou camest, the world and all it held

Was even as Memnon ere he felt the sun ;
Then Man stepped forth, the Spirit sprang to light,
Earth found her voice and heaven with music thrilled.
Nought is there therefore in thee but is pure,
Perfect, compact of correspondences,
Whereby the poems of the soul are read
In symbols fashioned from the plastic form.
Yea, it is mine by Art, the hierophant
Of myriads when these moving lips are dumb,
To find thy meaning, and to speak it forth
Through marble and through bronze that shall not fade ;
Making thy moulded shape—not face alone,
But hands, breast, lifted arms, firm limbs, that tell
Of service, strength, will, conquest, energy—
One message for the minds of those that know.

THE SINGER.

He fills the world with his singing,
  High notes of the heavenly morn
For ever and ever ringing
  As age after age is born.

And then he is still, and we know not
  Whither his thoughts have fled ;
Only the clear notes flow not,
  And we say, the singer is dead.

But the nightingales that he cherished,
They carol and cannot die ;
Though the man whom we loved hath perished,
His melody throbs for aye.

EYEBRIGHT.

As a star from the sea new risen,
As the waft of an angel's wing,
As a lark's song heard in prison,
As the promise of summer in spring,

She came to me through the stillness,
The shadows that ring me round,
The dungeon of years and illness
Wherein my spirit is bound.

She came with her eyes love-laden,
Her laughter of lily and rose,
A fragile and flower-like maiden,
In the season of frosts and snows.

She smiled and the shades departed ;
She shone and the snows were rain ;
And he who was frozen-hearted,
Bloomed up into love again.

A NOCTURNE.

THE clouds upon the hills hold sleep ;
I hear the thunder of the leap
Of cataracts from steep to steep.

She sleeps who on my breast so long
Breathed, as a soft and drowsy song
Breathes in the brain sad thoughts among.

Yet I sleep not ; for far away,
Rocked only on the tide of tears,
In that still curtained chamber grey
One lies alone till break of day—

One lies who loves me, one who hears
The murmur of the hills alway
In dreams, and lives again the years
And longs and prays and trusts and fears.

A FANCY.

A CAPTIVE leaning from his tower
Looked forth and doted on a flower ;
The flower beneath his prison-bar
Bloomed like a bright unconscious star.

Unknown, unseen, a lover stood
In ecstasy of solitude ;
Before his eyes the loved one there
Unthinking flourished free and fair.

The captive and the lover grew
Day after day more faint of hue ;
Day after day the girl and flower
Put forth fresh beauties hour by hour.

SORROW SONG.

A WEST wind wailing round the eaves,
Faint honey-dew on fading leaves,
The perfume of a flower that cleaves
To loosened hair :

The sobbing of a July storm,
Dreams of a half-remembered form,
An eagle's nest that once was warm,
Now robbed and bare :

A wandering child that seeks her home,
A flake of wind-tormented foam,
Unshriven ghosts that shrieking roam
The midnight air :

Music that dwindles on the ear,
Dim destinies of doubtful cheer,
Quenched orbs, and stars that disappear,
Dead foreheads fair :

So mingled are the mists that chill
My spirit with vague fears of ill,
That drowse my brain and freeze my will
With mute despair.

FAREWELL.

Thou goest : to what distant place
Wilt thou thy sunlight carry?
I stay with cold and clouded face :
How long am I to tarry?
Where'er thou goest, morn will be ;
Thou leavest night and gloom to me.

The night and gloom I can but take ;
I do not grudge thy splendour :
Bid souls of eager men awake ;
Be kind and bright and tender.
Give day to other worlds ; for me
It must suffice to dream of thee.

AN ALLEGORY.

A FLOWER I had, fairest of all that bloom,
Dull-hued, but exquisite with faint perfume
And shape imperial : in a vase I set
The tender roots and frail stem delicate—
A vase of agate, with fierce crimson stains
And fiery blood-clots and deep purple veins
Through palest opal flushing : to the brim
On either side, twining with tender limb
And hair blown into foam flakes, sorrow-sweet,
Clung carven Nereids ; and their silver feet,
Stayed on the broad base of the vase, their hands,
Joined midway neath its curling lip, with bands
Of wire-drawn gold were linked, like hers who lay
Spray-sprent to monsters of the deep a prey.

Here planted I my flower and watched her grow,
Veined leaf expand, and dusky petal blow
With subtle scent indefinitely suave :
Then with pure draughts of rain-dew did I lave
Daily the delicate filaments that through
Soft mould and moss their dainty juices drew ;
Hoping that haply, ere the spring had set
Dawnlike in summer's day, the violet
Of those dull buds to sanguine flame might burn,
And all my flower with fire transfigured yearn

Of hues intense and fragrance passionate :
For, said my books, of old at Eden gate
This flower had flaunted—yea, if warmly wooed,
Might doff once more her weeds of widowhood :
So wooed and waited I ; then, for that yet
No brighter blush upon her bloom was set,
But maidenlike and cold, for all my care,
She drew but darkness from the ripening air,
I from my veins let flow the ruddy tide,
And watered her with hot heart-blood, and spied
The crimson stream above the mosses foam
And sink life-fraught into the thirsty loam :
Wherefrom my plant took strength and mounted higher :—
Yet as the days drew on no fiercer fire
Flamed on her petals ; but green wealth of shoot
And sappy sucker and pale purple fruit
O'er-flowered her branches, and those sorrow-sweet
Eyes of the carven Nereids throbbed and beat
Pale sparks into my brain, and I more white
Than cherry flowers in April drained the bright
Fountains of life within my flesh, and grew
Fainter for every shower of priceless dew
Squandered. Ah me ! The spring to summer passed
And summer sank to autumn ; till at last,
Woe-wearied in my watching, crazed and spent
With utter loss and wild bewilderment,
I pressed the bed of fever. Earnest men
Sustained and with kind service watched me then,
And cool and slow and silent were the hours ;
The while two patient eager-hearted powers,

Dim Life and fierce-eyed Death, strove for my soul.
I nothing knew ; but in the strong control
Of slumber fluttered like a feeble thing ;
Till with the winnowing of his downy wing
Death brushed my forehead and withdrew, and I
Gazed once more conscious on the wintry sky ;
And by my side the fair flower ever green
Stood shorn of blossoms, and the opal sheen
Of that carved vase mirrored a thin wan face.

Then I arising knew again the place,
Where crazed with wilful fancy I had dreamed
An idle dream, and my past passion seemed
Mere madness ; for the flower, fed with pure dew,
As erst with blood, flourished no less, but drew
Strong draughts of life-juice for another spring
Of soulless beauty and dull blossoming.

DISAPPOINTMENT.

Down from the hills divine the waters glide,
From the white snow-wreaths down the mountain side,
And in the salt sea-foam their sweetness hide.

Day after day the steady cliffs and steep
Silently crumble like the shapes of sleep,
And on their broken basement dreams the deep.

The clouds come sailing from the windy West
Over the limitless blue ocean's breast,
But in the bitter East they find no rest.

Foam-flakes of snow across the fields are blown
Where, underneath, the sleeping grain is strown,
And on the wold the winds of winter moan.

I left the highland of my hopes for thee,
Downward I hurried full of love and glee,
But in thy bosom found the barren sea.

My heart that seemed so strong to bear the blows
Of chance and change, false friends and fated foes,
Melts downward daily wasting with fresh woes.

Weeping I bear the freight of holy tears,
And loving words, and hopes, and idle fears,
And whispered sighs to thy unheeding ears.

Now hath the winter of my life begun;
Thy blinding drifts are tossed against the sun,
And o'er my frozen soul thy whirlwinds run.

THE REJECTED SUPPLIANT.

A PILGRIM to your shrine I came;
I sprinkled myrrh upon the flame—
Myrrh of my spirit, tears and sighs,
With eloquence of earnest eyes.

I strewed the temple-steps with flowers—
Laughter and love and honeyed hours,
All that my April had to yield
From scented copse and lilied field.

I wreathed the chapel-walls with bays,
Laurels of song and sounding praise,
Bright burnished leaves of wit that shines
For ever in melodious lines.

I clasped your casket round with gems,
With moonèd pearls and coral stems,
For which I dived into the sea
Of azure-eyed philosophy.

Unto the altar-horns I tied
Captives and victims—slaughtered pride—
Poured forth the blood of years, and slew
My hopes a holocaust for you.

Before your face I lighted fires—
Torches of innocent desires,
And holy humble joys that shine
In crystal urns or opaline.

I filled the dome with chaunt and hymn,
From lips of living cherubim—
The fiery host of thoughts, that ne'er
Forgot their task of praise and prayer.

Beneath your feet I made my bed ;
Sackcloth and sand and straw I laid,
That lying thus I still might be
Wakeful if you should summon me.

But all was vain : no word, no sign,
From mouth or forehead marble-fine,
Hath sounded through the years to bless
Your servant in his sore distress.

I waited, and I watched my prime
Grow faint beneath the feet of time ;
Now watch and wait no more I can,
Lest I should cease to be a man.

Up then ! 'tis night : the temple-door
Stands open : from the jewelled floor
I turn : no voice recalls me : so
Forth to the wilderness I go.

MENE, MENE.

That precious priceless gift, a soul
Unto thyself surrendered whole,
Withdrawn from all but thy control,
Thou hast foregone.

The throne where none might sit but thou,
The crown of love to bind thy brow,
Glad homage paid with praise and vow,
Thou hast foregone.

I do not blame thee utterly,
But rather strive to pity thee,
Remembering all the empery
Thou hast foregone.

It was thy folly, not thy crime,
To have contemned the call sublime,
The realm more firm than fate or time
Thou hast foregone.

IN DREAMLAND.

Down among the grey green sallows
Runs a cool translucent stream,
Rippling over pebbly shallows
Like the Lethe of Love's dream,
Broadening into pools of amber
Under rocks where wild vines clamber,
And the lilac wind-flowers gleam.

There the turf is smooth and mossy,
Still unshorn and ever new ;
Each young shoot and herblet glossy
Drinks at eve the tender dew :
For no storms assail the garden,
Frosts nor winds the rathe leaves harden,
And the heavens are hazy blue.

On the boughs the quinces mellow
Mid the dim green shades above,
Spheres of purest palest yellow
With the scent that speaks of love ;
Proserpine's pomegranates under
Ripen, redden, fall asunder,
Gem with gold the myrtle grove.

High o'er head sleep-cradled zephyrs
Sway the bay boughs to and fro,
Over meads where milk-white heifers
Knee-deep in the grasses go ;
And where'er the streamlet wanders,
Faint-hued fragrant oleanders
Drop their petals soft as snow.

In a dream Night led me thither,
And I saw assembled here
All the loves that bloom and wither
In our gross terrestrial sphere ;

Mid the myrtles, on the meadows,
All the joys that leave but shadows,
  All the days that disappear :

Changed to flowers and very quiet,
  Fragrant in perpetual spring,
After life's uneasy riot
  Folded under death's broad wing,
Gathered, garnered in a slumber
Which no waking dreams encumber,
  Where remembrance hath no sting.

LEUKÉ.

LEUKÉ.

I.

Mid the bleak billows of the Euxine sea,
In solitude and silence, far withdrawn
From sight or sound of vexed humanity,

There sleeps the island Leuké ; on whose lawn
Shines a white temple-front, with pillars fair,
And porches turned to greet the ascendant dawn.

The brazen gates stand open to the air :
The cell lies tenantless : no human hands
E'er touched the inmost shrine with priestly care.

But on the wind-swept, smooth, unfooted sands,
Where wild waves lap, there dwell broad-wingèd birds
In sweet societies and silvery bands,

With golden beaks and feathers white as curds,
Whose prey is in the waters, and whose ear
Hath ne'er been startled yet by mortal words.

Their task it is through the revolving year
To tend that hero's temple : day by day,
What time the sun's bright coursers upward steer,

Wetting their pinions in the salt sea-spray,
With weird sea-cries and clash of circling wings,
Up from their soft nests on the sandy bay

Like flakes of snow they flock. Each halcyon brings
The burden of his plumage pure with brine ;
Purges the gleaming altar ; wheels, and flings

Presents of pearls and corals on the shrine ;
Sweeps the smooth marble walls with pinions wide,
Striving his best to make the temple fine.—

Such charge gave Thetis to the watchful-eyed
Brood of the bitter sea-foam, for the sake
Of him, the hero-son, who was her pride ;

For here, 'tis said, Achilles rest will take,
What time he wearies of the Elysian mead,
Or spares the wild boar in the Idan brake.

Be this as this may be, it is my creed
That Peleus' son is still a hero blest ;
For he was fair, and born of noble breed,

And stout the lion-heart within his breast ;
Young too he died, and divine Homer sung
His deeds in verse that shall outlive the best :

Nay, more ! the friend to whom in life he clung,
In death he succoured ; love so strong, so sore,
Sustained him that the sea-queen's warning tongue
Turned not his fleet feet from the fatal shore.

II.

While thus I mused on Leuké, o'er my soul
Sleep passed ; but ere boon slumber held my brain
In deep night's irresistible control,

I blent that old-world story with the strain
Of nearer memories : and now, methought,
I walked with him whose love is life's great gain,

Across smooth snow-fields, and a roof was wrought
Over our heads of rosy sunset flame,
Wherein two lustrous lights of heaven were caught :

For lo, the thin moon and keen Hesper came
Together mid those fiery waves, and we
Leaped up to greet in them Love's oriflamme.

What words were ours, O friend ! How fervently
We spake of comradeship, that lamp of love,
Starlike descried by those who wait and see,

Firm in the faith and hope they may not prove !—
Therefore, ere slumber seized me, memories twain
Waved their blent plumes my drowsèd sense above.

But when thought merged in dreaming, once again
I swept smooth waters in a trembling bark,
Oared by six stalwart brazen-breasted men.

Late sunset paled above me ; like a spark
Burned Hesper, darting silvery rays between
Two wings of cloud that shook the threatening dark

From their devouring pinions ; and a green
Island uprose to westward, lone and still,
Where nought but one grey man was dimly seen.

Bowed as in slumber, or grief terrible ;
Bending the weight of tawny curls upon
His knees in-gathered to the breast, and still

Clasped by firm hands of strength, though pale and wan,
He more than mortal slept, or seemed to sleep ;
While on his head heaven rained full rays, and shone.

'Who art thou, Lord and Master?' Forth did leap,
Fledged with Greek word-wings, from my lips the cry
That in my prescient spirit brooded deep.

Raising the wonder of his face on high
To drink those floods of starlight, silverly
Poured from the waning pallor of the sky,

He smiled a little space ; then looked at me :
'Here, long before thy Christ was born, I dwelt ;
Here still must bide the golden days to be :

'I am not dead ; I sleep not ; I have felt
Each pulse the world's heart made, and well I know
How with the seed of men high God hath dealt :

'Therefore I wait ; swift years may come and go,
But my youth cannot fade, nor my star wane :
Yea, still I hope, and still rejoice ; for lo,

'The day soon cometh, when across the main
A mighty bard forth from the West will flee
On wings of song to set me free again :

'Then shall I rise like morning ; men shall see
My beauty ; the wide world shall bless my name,
Yielding glad homage to my Deity.'

Winged with light Greek, to me this answer came.
Wherefore once more I strove to murmur : 'Lord,
May I too help ?' Again he smiled, and flame

Woke in his eyes. Then from the turfy sward
That lipped those tranquil waters, bending down,
He plucked one purple bell divinely starred,

And tossed it to me : but, methought, a crown
Of those same violet blossoms in his hair
Was woven with bay leaves and myrtles brown.

Therewith his curls he shook ; and on the air
Fell silvery syllables of vowelled Greek :
'Be this for thee a token ! Unaware,

'Thou also servest, though thy sight be weak !
My hour is not yet come ; but when that hour
Cometh, behold I shall no longer speak

'The tongues of buried nations ! '—Here the power
Of sleep was broken ; but I knew that he
Was Love, who thus in dreams had talked with me.
Wherefore I rose, and plucked of song this flower.

III.

Thou shalt live ! Men shall call to each other :
Behold a new star in the skies !
Our Master, our Comrade, our Brother,
All hail for the light of thine eyes !

For the Poet whose words are as thunder,
Shall sail from the waves of the West,
With melody cleaving asunder
The blackness of night in thy breast.

He shall come when the day is ascendant,
When the dews of the dawn are yet young ;
From the prow of his galley resplendent
The rays of the East shall be flung.

He shall cry to thee : Come to us, Master !
And slumber shall fall from thine eyes ;
The pulse in thy heart shall beat faster ;
Yea, Love, thou shalt leap and arise !

And the words of thy message like honey
Shall fall from the flower of thy mouth,
With music more sweet than the sunny
Dead speech of the delicate South.

Men stalwart and bearded shall listen ;
Young men shall rejoice in their pride ;
And the eyes of fair striplings shall glisten,
While they cry to thee : Master, abide !

Come forth from thine island, and teach us
The truth of those excellent things,
Whereof the strange melodies reach us
On world-weary musical wings !

Come forth : let the past and the present
Clasp hands o'er the ocean of time :
The sun of the West is yet crescent ;
The year of our youth's at its prime !

AN IMPROVISATION ON THE VIOLIN.

AN IMPROVISATION ON THE VIOLIN.

SONATA QUASI UNA FANTASIA.

O HEART, false heart, why tearest thou me again?
May not the quick soul-fire be quenched, the fount
Of tears be wasted in the withered eyes?
Are there yet men for whom my breast must bleed,
My soul be shattered? Ah! most pitiless Muse!
Am I not deaf and very old with sorrow?

Nay, Power implacable! I heed thee not!
Thou, and thy steadfast eyes and wings that soar
Straight to the centre of the sun—Forbear!
Forbear them! lest I perish—nay, sweet Queen!
Lest, like some lonely pelican, I feed
My fasting children with lifeblood and die!

Ah me! in vain I plead! Hark how the chords
Come crowding—how like hammer-strokes they fall—
The measured blows of brazen-fingered Fate,

Of brazen-footed Fate the heavy tread,
Of brazen wings the winnowing ! Stroke on stroke,
On the vexed anvil of my soul they throb,
Pauseless. Did thus the Titan groan, whom Zeus
Rove to the houseless rock and gave a prey
To frost and fire and the sharp vulture's beak ?
Did he thus idly wrestle ? Till the dews
Of evening fell, and from the nether mist
Rose maiden choirs of Oceanides
To soothe his sorrow. Even so my soul
Melts with melodious ministration, soothes
Her sorrow in the solace of a song ;
Fitfully floats upon the wings of dreaming,
Flutters and floats. Dim faces of the past,
Dear voices which I heard but hear no more,
The laughter and the love of long ago,
Sphere me with sweetness. But—ah ! woe is me !
Again the chords come crashing ! No, no, no !
The brazen tongue of Fate, the trumpet-tongue,
Scornfully—through the chambers of my brain
Blown like a crack of doom—scatters the dream,
And slays me ! Now the trampling of swift steeds—
Now the sharp clangour of the jarring car :—
Where will ye whirl me ? Flames around the wheels
Bicker, and iron hooves on flinty ways
Strike sparks : I feel the fury of strong winds !
Ay ! combat ; toss me down the sleety surge ;
Sustain and slacken ; buffet me with blows ;—
I can endure. Mid-way the stars are rolled

In azure, and the solemn night rides clear.
I mark the billows of high hilltops laid
Beneath me : on the dark, as on a sea,
Forward I sail. The tumult and the din
Die downward : but soul-terror, like a spell,
Broods on this solitude. The leaden chords
Fall one by one, like raindrops, when a storm
Weeps out her last low sob and down the hills
Draws early twilight. Hush ! what sounds are these ?
Rustling of leaves on beechen boughs and birch
And branches of green oak. Athwart them glides
Clear summer sunlight, and a breeze above
Sings summer-laden with fresh scent of flowers.
The woodland laughs, and peeping faces peer,
Faunlike or Satyrlike ! Even so I strayed,
Years since, through forest-aisles, and sang ; while yet
The hours flew not uncomforted of song,
Nor on insensible ears this veil had fallen
Deadening like drifted snow the feet of sound.
Ah ! dark and lonely—very lone and dark—
Shut out, ah me ! from human speech, my soul
Pines like a banished thing of shame apart,
Mourns like an orphan ! Yea, when cities ring,
Wrought by my melodies to rapture, I,
Their maker, through the symphonies and hymns,
Through the triumphant trumpet-clang and wail
Of passionate viols and pathetic flutes,
Sit, see the tears that flow, the earnest eyes,
The fiery souls forth-gazing—sit unmoved,

Of all those eager and impetuous crowds
Passionless alone and cold—except for sorrow !

Yet even thus I triumph ! Even thus,
Through silence and dark dungeon-hours unsunned,
With thee, thou prisonless angel, soul of song,
That seekest not for sound of pipe or flute,
Or resonant tube, or human voice divine,
I commune ! Thou dost visit me and wave
Thy wings harmonious at the bars that seal
My cell, painting with splendour the dull walls !

So mused the master ; while, as if in wrath,
The vexed reverberations of his viol,
Fitfully stricken, like a lute that lies
Forgotten by some window-chink and bears
The rude caresses of the wandering wind,
Flung to the void tones dissonantly jangled,
With here a shuddering shriek, and here a discord,
Sharp as the rasped teeth of a rusty saw,
Wrenched from the scrannel strings. Yet that great soul
Lay pent within close prison walls, nor heard
How the racked viol, like a tortured fiend,
Made music unmelodious ; but heard
The everlasting harmonies, and through
The sphery regions of sidereal song
Voyaged ; his large eyes vacant, and his brow
Bent with its weight of curls upon the bow.

POEMS ON GREEK THEMES.

HESPERUS AND HYMENÆUS.

OR, THE SHEPHERD AND THE STAR.

Sh. HESPER, thou golden light of happy Love,
Hesper, thou holy pride of purple eve,
Moon among stars, but star beside the moon,
Hail friend ! and since the young moon sets to-night
Too soon below the mountain, trim thy lamp
To guide me to the shepherd whom I love.
No theft I purpose : no wayfaring man,
Belated, would I watch and make my prey.
Love is my goal ; and love how fair it is,
When friend meets friend sole in the silent night,
Thou knowest, Hesper.

H. Yea, indeed I know :
Doth not this eye, immortal steadfast fire,
Set in the dewy forehead of mild eve,
See all things ? Listen, shepherd, and beguile
Thy way by hearing how a god can love.

Sh. Speak, Hesper, I will listen ; and for this

Thy shrine shall never lack the gift of flowers
And golden honey and sweet myrrh and wine.

H. It was the prime of summer, when the sheep
Seek their deep-sheltered valleys, and the goats
Crop bitter blossom by the barren shore :
I, leaning from the mountain in the glow
Of golden eve, down the long-wandering stream
Cast my still, tremulous ray, until the rocks
Broadened that held the rill, and made a pool
Cold, crystal, overhung with feathery fern
And lemon-boughs, dropping pale maiden tresses
Star-sprent with blossoms to the nymph below.
One nightingale, the last of all her choir,
Thrilled in the thicket : Love, love, love, she cried,
Pouring the passion of her lonely song.
There my rays rested : there my influence lay ;
And the mild nymph rose from her rocky cave
To play upon the pool. When hush ! through the grove
Bounding, loud singing, crowned with roses, came
The shepherd Hymenæus, hot with wine
From dame Demeter's banquet : the goat skin
Flew from his shoulder, and the marble limbs,
White, god-like, tinged with crimson, shone below
As if a light were in them. My pale star
Grew, palpitating, glowed beneath his gaze,
And all the pool shimmered with living splendour.
He leaping in was clasped in my embrace :—
Ah, Hymenæus ! never more to be
A simple shepherd on Thessalian hills,

To pipe and dance and shear the silly sheep,
To sleep at noontide under murmuring pines,
Or in the ivy-curtained cave to sing
Sweet love-lorn ditties to dark Thestylis,
To dwell beside the slender cypress-tree
In that white cottage near thy native stream,
To gaze far over olives to the sea,
Blue, flecked with snowy sails, to climb at eve
The withered hill-side after wandering goats,
To live and die an unremembered swain !
For thou wert fair !—He, floating in my arms,
Saddened, grew sober, looked into the sky :
The tall trees vibrated, the crystal dome
Trembled, and all the odorous love-sick air
Sighed in the song of the lorn nightingale ;
Till the boy wept, yearned, longed to reach my light,
And grew forgetful of his village home.
Then I spoke, speaking as I speak to thee :—
Arise, O shepherd, leave the valley lawns,
Leave the white sheep to glimmer on the lea ;
Rise, for my star upon the mountain dawns,
And heaven in sapphire silence yearns for thee.
Climb the grey crags and thread the dusk ravine
Where filmy veils of vapour downward drop :
My star shall guide thee, shining fair between
The gaunt grey pines and gleaming mountain top.
The snows of Oeta round her ledges lie,
The stones are sharp for tender feet like thine ;
Long is the road that scales the toilsome sky

And joins thy burning heart to love divine.
Yet faint not, fail not : even now my lips
Sleep pale upon the lilies of thy brow,
And in thy steadfast eyes my starlight dips
Her thirsty rays with thy pure light to glow.
Arise, O shepherd, even now my beam
Encircles thee with webs of throbbing fire ;
From Oeta's horns I bend, and panting stream
My godhood round thy limbs to lift thee higher.
Dead is the day ; his rosy lips are cold ;
And yellow all the tracts of pathless snow :
My star alone, in lucid amber rolled,
Gleams to thy valley ghostly grey below.
Now is my hour. My lamp of love in heaven
Flames yet before night's tardy trampling steed,
And, ere the stars flash forth, to me is given
Power o'er the air my wingèd wish to speed.
So thou art mine ; and when I sink below
The luminous edges of yon western cloud,
Thou too shalt pass, and in my empire know
The joy that makes the starry circles loud.
Swathed in my arms thy youthful limbs shall steam
With light as hills with vapour, and thy hair,
Bright as a phosphorous meteor, far shall seem
To spread a trailing glory through the air :
And men shall say, Behold yon wondrous sight—
A youth—a cloud of brightness—on the bar
Of sunset, lo, he stands, and in the light
Of Hesper trembles with the trembling star.

I ceased, and heaven was silent. From the stream
My light had faded : one by one the stars
Flushed into brightness ; but behind the hills
Glimmering I rested. By the darkened pool
Sad Hymenæus, pale and startled, threw
Wild wondering upward arms and eager eyes
To the cold, cloven, unrelenting horns ;
Then sighed, and ceasing not his steadfast gaze,
All night he travelled, all next day he rose
Beneath the calm brows of the journeying sun ;
But, when eve drew her dusky veil, he stood,
Forehead to forehead, breast to breast, with me—
With me the god, clad in my silver glory—
And earth lay low beneath him. Shepherd, stay !
There is a land behind the western cloud,
A low deep meadow land of ceaseless spring
And everlasting twilight : olives there
Shed a perpetual shade of softened lustre
Like woven light on the green grass below ;
Where foam-white asphodels, tall milky blossoms,
Shimmer with interchange of hyacinth,
Blood-red anemone, and faint narcissus ;
And the blue violet strays in sweet tangles,
Seen and unseen, by pool and running brook,
Lulling the sense with fragrance ; while a song
Rocks in the odorous height of spreading pine
And spiry cypress and aerial palm.
There Hymenæus dwells with me, what time
We rest from roaming the star-spangled sky.

There all good lovers, after toilsome life,
Lie raimented with everlasting youth.
And thee, too, shepherd, we will welcome there,
If to young Myrtilus thy faith thou keep :
For this is virtue, when a friend with friend
Linked in strong bonds of union, lets the years
Flow over them unheeded, sees the flower
Of boyhood perish, and man's strength appear,
Yet alters not, but grows in tenderness
And mutual reverence and equal love ;
Till the grey-bearded village sires approve,
Nodding their heads, and cry, the age of gold
Comes round again when lovers thus can lead
Pure wedded lives of Achilleian honour.

Sh. Thanks, Hesper, the long mountain path is done ;
The cypress shivers by the shepherd's door ;
And thou art near thy setting : thanks to thee,
Hesper, of all true lovers guide and friend,
Thyself of lovers chief among the gods.

THE FEET OF THE BELOVED.

ῥυθμοὶ ποδῶν φιλτάτων.

FEAR not to tread ; it is not much
To bless the meadow with your touch :
Nay, walk unshod ; for, as you pass,
The dust will take your feet like grass.
O dearest melodies, O beat
Of musically moving feet !
Stars that have fallen from the sky
To sparkle where you let them lie ;
Blossoms, a new and heavenly birth,
Rocked on the nourishing breast of earth;
Dews that on leaf and petal fling
Multitudinous quivering ;
Winged loves with light and laughter crowned ;
Kind kisses pressed upon the ground !

FROM MAXIMUS TYRIUS.

I.

A GOODLY form thou seest, a face in bloom,
And limbs that bear the bud of ripening days ;
Touch not, corrupt not ; spare the faint perfume ;
Pass like a wayfarer with honest praise,
Who sees by some fair shrine the palm upraise

Her tender shaft ; and leaves the shoot to be
For Phœbus or for Zeus a stately tree.

II.

O for the arrows and the bows of eyes !
No Syrian and no Parthian and no Mede
Shoots as Love shoots from those crystalline skies.
O for the wings of words, the windy speed
Of sighs that bear him like a flying steed !
Now on the threshold of thy soul he stands :
Wilt thou gainsay his will with praying hands ?

III.

With fate and fear and forceful sovereignty
Love wageth bitter war; for he is wild,
Untameable, and proud, and very free ;
Of fire and air the lightning-wingèd child ;
Fierce to his foemen, to his servants mild ;
Not to be bought with gold or land or fee,
But found unsought by souls as strong as he.

IV.

For wealth Love cares not, nor no tyrant fears ;
He smiles at swellings of the perilous seas ;
Before his face eternal spring appears ;
He threads the woods and pathless wilds with ease ;
He shuns not what men shun—fire, death, disease ;
Nor what men troublous find, can trouble him ;
No length of days shall make his radiance dim.

AN EPISODE.

PHÆDO, AN OLD MAN, AT HIS FARM IN ELIS, SPEAKS.

'Oh, Phaidon, Phaidon!'—Years since then have flown,
Athenian guest, and I who speak was young.—
Yet still, 'Oh, Phaidon, Phaidon!' here within,
The clear kind voice is ringing.—It was noon;
But I face-downward in the accursèd den
Lay bowed with grief, while for a veil this hair,
Then golden and unshorn, o'er cheeks and eyes
Rained in the sunlight of the opening door.—
'Oh, Phaidon, Phaidon!'—That was all he said:
But there was something in the tone so pure,
So tender, yet withal so subtly blent
With laughter rippling from a deep strong soul,
As though the man who spoke dared smile at sin,
That well I knew those words meant help, meant love,
Deliverance, sunrise, hope and health once more.—
You know what followed?—Yes? you know he lay
And stroked these same long curls until he died?—
'Oh, Phaidon, Phaidon!'—That was all; but all
Was in those words, and when I die, methinks
My soul will hear them from his lips in heaven.

TO RHODOCLEIA.

To thee whose name and fame are of roses,
Fair Rhodocleia, this wreath from me
Shall speak of youth when the bloom uncloses,
And speak of death and the days to be.

Here is narcissus the rathe rain-lover,
And here are wavering wind-flowers frail,
And here are roses that wreathe and cover
The foreheads of men by love made pale;

Violets blue as the veins that wander
O'er breasts we love when we dream Love true,
And lilies that laugh to the sunlight yonder
On meadows drenched with the morning dew.

But when this crown on thy brow reposes,
Learn from the blossoms, and be not vain;
For time fades thee, as he fades the roses;
Nor they nor thou may revive again.

AT DIOCLES' TOMB AT MEGARA.

These offerings to thy tomb I bring;
These curls upon the flames I fling:
True tears, and curls, of youth the pride;
Justments for one who nobly died.

Friend, comrade, slain in fight for me !
How can I live to honour thee ?
What office that the shades allow
Dare I perform to please thee now ?

Alas ! thine ear is cold, thine eyes
Are shrouded from the blithesome skies ;
By Lethe's stream thou liest low
Mid the tall poppy-stems arow.

A little dust, a brazen urn,
A mound bedecked with fringèd fern,
Mid olive avenues so grey
They seem to blunt the shafts of day ;—

This then is all that's left of thee,
Who wast the light of life to me !
Thou canst not hear, thou wilt not rise,
Nor see the tears that dim these eyes.

I ne'er shall take at eventide
Sweet counsel, walking by thy side ;
Ne'er clasp thy hand, nor wake and say
'Friend, art thou there ?' at break of day.

Farewell ! Farewell ! That chilly word,
Blown back upon my lips unheard,
Is far more sad than thy last cry—
'Dear heart ! be glad although I die.'

THE SACRIFICE.

A FRAGMENT.

Dawn whitened—for it was midsummer dawn—
O'er dim Pentelicus. The sleep that lay
On those two lovers, melted like a mist,
Leaving their spirits bare beneath the skies
Of lofty purpose. Nor to flinch or fail
Was theirs. But, having bathed pure limbs, they stepped
Into the stirless city-streets ; the arm
Of brave Cratinus round the sinewy girth
Of his tall comrade twining. So they moved ;
And morning grew around them, with a press
And pulse of coming glory, ever more
Flame-pure from base to zenith of clear skies ;
Till by the cell of Epimenides
Standing, they saw the golden face upraised
Of Phœbus ; and the pale priest welcomed them
With : 'Hail, thrice hail ! beloved of heaven, the sons
Of Athens, and her saviours, who have dared
Thus in her sorest need, at price of pain
And laughter lost in death, to purchase honour !
Assume the robe of sacrifice : the crown
Of innocent flowers, for you by fate foreseen,
On locks of youth and manhood's crispy curls
Lay joyfully : for lo, the elders sound,—

Hark, in the porches and the paths beneath,—
Your triumph, and a breathless people throngs
The marble temple-steps to greet with blessings
Their heroes !' They as in a dream beheld
The lengthening light, which ne'er for them should flame
To noon ; the sweet Ionian vowels heard
Of youths and maids ; the loved warm life within
Drank, dying. Then the long procession moved
Around them—earnest eyes, and sobs, and feet
That faltered on the pavement ; praying men,
And tearful women ; music, and the scent
Of summer morning ; bees that drowsily
Flew by with honey-burden of full hives ;
All dear familiar things transformed and hallowed ;
The awful shrine, the altar, and the knife !—
Thus, as they lay, and death drew near, a sound
Swelled in their ears of singing, and they slept.

ART IS LOVE.

SCENE : *The Lesche at Delphi.*

Speakers : POLYGNOTUS *the Painter, and* THERON, *Tyrant of Agrigentum.*

Ther. Teach me, friend Polygnotus, what is Art.
Pol. This craft of mine, sire ; that of Pheidias ;
Or that of Damon or the Theban lyrist.

Ther. Nay, but I asked thee not to tell the tale
Of men and of their labours. Prithee, say
What power is it that works in thee and them
Compelling worship.

Pol. Haply 'tis some god.

Ther. Ay, Polygnotus : but what god ? We see
Thought, skill, strength, passion, industry that makes
Men like to gods in labour, for no end
Of use or profit spent, but to delight
The soul with shadows of her highest striving ;
The fruit whereof is art. What thing then is it
Which without service of man's need is set
As the high goal whereto man's spirit striveth ?

Pol. I am, O king, a craftsman, skilled to make,
Unskilled to speak : yet listen ; Art is Love.

Ther. Love, sayest thou ? Love, who from the clash of things
Created order, or that laughing boy
Who sleeps on cheeks of maidens and of youths
Drowned in day-dreaming ?

Pol. Yea, 'tis Love I mean :
But of his lineage I would have you learn
What poets have kept hidden. They pretend
Love is a god, young, fair, desirable,
Fulfilled of sweetness and self-satisfied,
Treading the smooth paths of luxurious spirits.
Not thus I know him ; for, methinks, he hungers
Full oftentimes and thirsts, yearning to clasp
The softness, tenderness, and grace he hath not.

He was begotten, as old prophets tell me,
At the birth-feast of Beauty by a slave,
Invention, on a beggar, Poverty ;
Therefore he serves all fair things, and doth hold
From his dame nothing, from his father wit
Whate'er he lacks to win.

Ther. You speak in riddles :
Not thus have Hesiod and blind Homer sung him.

Pol. Nathless 'tis true : and Art, whereby men mould
Bronze into breathing limbs, or round these lines
With hues delusive, or join verse to verse,
Or wed close-married sounds in hymn and chorus,
Is Love ; poor Love that lacks, strong Love that conquers ;
Love like a tempest bending to his will
The heart and brain and sinews of the maker,
Who, having nought, seeks all, and hath by seeking.
Look now : the artist is not soft or young,
Supple or sleek as girls and athletes are,
But blind like Homer, like Hephaistos lame.
True child of Poverty, he feels how scant
Is the world round him ; and he fain would fashion
A fairer world for his free soul to breathe in.
The strife between what is and what he covets,
Stings him to yearning ; till his father, Craft,
Cries—stretch thy hand forth, take thy fill, and furnish
Thy craving soul with all for which she clamours.

Ther. Is it so easy then to win the prize
You artists play for ? I, a king, find Love
A hard task-master.

Pol. Ay, and so is Art.
Many a painter through the long night watches
Till frozen day-spring hath lain tired with waiting
At his dream's door-step, watering the porch
With tears, suspending rose-wreaths from the lintel,
Thrice blest if but the form he woos be willing
To kiss his cold lips in the blush of morning.
And though that kiss be given, even then,
Mid that supreme beatitude, there lingers
An aching want—a sense of something missed—
Secluded, cloud-involved, and unattained—
The melody that neither flute nor lyre,
Through breath of maidens or sharp smitten strings,
Hath rendered. See how Art is like to Love!
For lovers, though they mingle, though close lips
To lips be wedded, hair with streaming hair
And limb with straining limb be interwoven,
Yet are their souls divided; yet their flesh
Aches separate and unassuaged, desiring
What none shall win, that supreme touch whereby
Of two be made one being. Even so
In art we clasp the shape imperishable
Of beauty, clasp and kiss and cling and quiver;
While, far withdrawn, the final full fruition,
The melting of our spirit in the shape
She woos, still waits :—a want no words can fathom.
Thus Art is Love. And, prithee, when was lover
Or artist owner of fat lands and rents?
Poor are they both and prodigal; yet mighty;

And both must suffer.—I have heard, O king,
The pearls your mistress wears upon her sleeve,
Are but the product of an oyster's pain.
Between its two great shells the creature lies
Storing up strength and careless, till a thorn
Driven by deft fingers probes the hinge that joins
Well-fitting wall to wall ; the poor fish pines,
Writhes, pours thin ichor forth, and well nigh drains
His substance : when at last the wound is healed,
A pearl lurks glistening in the piercèd shell.
See now your artist : were there no quick pain,
How should the life-blood of his heart be given
To make those pearls called poems, pictures, statue ?

Ther. Are lovers oysters then as well as artists ?—
Nay, prithee, brook the jest ! I take your meaning.

MARTYRDOM.

Did I not tell you so, and cry :
'Rash soul, by Kupris, you'll be caught !
Ah, luckless soul, why will you fly
So near the toils that Love had wrought ?'

Did I not warn you ? Now the net
Has tangled you, and in the string
You vainly strive, for Love hath set
And bound your pinions, wing to wing ;

And placed you on the flames to pine,
And rubbed with myrrh your panting lip,
And when you thirsted given you wine
Of hot and bitter tears to sip.

Ah, weary soul, fordone with pain!
Now in the fire you burn, and now
Take respite for a while again,
Draw better breath and cool your brow!

Why weep and wail? What time you first
Sheltered wild Love within your breast,
Did you not know the boy you nursed
Would prove a false and cruel guest?

Did you not know? See, now he pays
The guerdon of your fostering care
With fire that on the spirit preys,
Mixed with cold snow-flakes of despair!

You chose your lot. Then cease to weep:
Endure this torment: tame your will:
Remember, what you sowed, you reap:
And, though it burns, 'tis honey still!

PANTARKES.

The Temple of Zeus at Olympia.

PHEIDIAS *seated before his nearly finished Statue: the youth* PANTARKES *beside him. Both are looking at* ZEUS *and at the Statue of Victory, a portrait of* PANTARKES, *between the god's knees.* PHEIDIAS *speaks.*

WHO made that mythus of eternal youth?—
Perchance it means but what I give to thee,
Pantarkes! Not young life in simple sooth,

But lifeless life for perpetuity
Congealed in marble. This at least shall last
When thou to dust art rendered utterly:

Thy very self, the truth of what thou wast,
The thought, the form, the beauty that imbued
Thy substance with divinity, and cast

In mortal mould a god's similitude.—
Strange that thy thought should live, thy type endure,
When thou art nought; that gods have set this feud

'Twixt perishable flesh and spirit pure;
That man in combat with unconquered power
Can make at least the form he loves secure,

When life and what he clings to—the frail flower
Of limbs that bloom, and eyes that answer, lips
That render kisses—these are Hades' dower !

Cold life in stone is Phœbus in eclipse,
The ring and rondure of a shrunken sun,
A darkened disc touched by death's finger-tips.

Well ! I have wrought what best availed ; have won
This much of life undying, deathless name,
For thee, my chosen. Victors, one by one,

Shall sue thee and shall crown thee ! for their fame
Flows from thy gift : thou, stationed at the knee
Of Zeus, enringed with radiant altar flame,

Shalt stand for symbol of that Victory
That signs the years of Hellas. Well I ween
An ample orb of awful empery

Awaits my Thunderer ; and thou between
His knees Olympian, like a palm that springs
Skyward through chasms of the cleft ravine,

Shalt tempt all eyes with lustre ; these thy wings
Shall winnow souls, when eyes are over-worn
With gazing at that grandeur of the king's

Impendent eyebrows.—Lo, his fearful scorn,
His terrible fixed forehead, stern and strong !—
From black-browed night to rosy-dimpled morn

We turn for solace. So to thee we turn
From Zeus Olympian. Will they dream, I wonder,
Those men in days unborn, who come to burn

Beneath thy beauty, when they melt thereunder,
That I who carved thee, loved thee ; filled thy splendour
As full with living love as Zeus with thunder ;

That in thy sculptured form I do but render
The mute insensible melodies of thee,
Thy lore of loveliness divinely tender?

Nay, God alone is Demiurge. To me
He gave a little skill, a wavering hand,
Sometime obedient to the brain. But He

Himself made thee. What form profoundly planned,
What abstract of all beauty, what supreme
Essence of true proportion pure and grand,

The very substance of a sculptor's dream,
Dare stand by thee, thy simple self, the youth
Who mid the olives by Alphëus' stream

Bared breast and shoulder? No : the naked truth
Of such as thou art, fools our soaring skill.
We do our best ; our best remains uncouth,

Compact of error. On their holy hill
How laugh the gods to see these apes, these men,
Vainly Promethean, while their puppets fill

The stage of earth with radiance that escapes
From life like lightning, in a myriad modes
Breathing and moving. Shadows, frozen shapes,

Phantoms, pale corpses from their cold abodes
Evoked to stare in marble ; these our craft
Can bungle. Better were it to write odes,

Like Pindar hymning thee ; on words to waft
Thy melodies adown the windy ways
Of deathless generations ; wing some shaft

Of song with burning pinions of thy praise,
And smite the souls of nations ! Hearing him,
What lover but would crown, for thee, with bays

The boy beside him ? So thy fame should brim
An everlasting goblet of new wine
Outpoured by hearts elate, and ne'er grow dim.

Well : each man hath his mastery.—This is mine.—
Pindar perchance might envy me ; for love,
Inordinate of appetite, doth pine

For all the gifts that gods can give, to prove
By prodigality how vast the sea
Unsearchable o'er which his pinions move.

Behold, Pantarkes ! I have sculptured thee
Even as I saw thee first that summer-time,
When thou wert chosen from the boys to be

Monarch of beauty in thine April prime.
Here in my statue are those lifted arms,
Those bending brows, that slender form sublime !

My art hath added nought. These vulgar charms
Of gold and ivory obscure and shroud
The sun that shining from thy forehead warms

The soul of poets !—I am old and bowed
With years, with labours ; thou too, thou shalt fail
And fade and pass within death's icy cloud :

Therefore my skill some trifle must avail
To save a fragment from death's tyrannous jaw.—
Alas for youth, so fair, so phantom-frail !

Alas for that wide unappeasable maw
That yawns for men, for all things ! Some few years,
Some little space, I stand above the law,

And shield thee. Then we perish—Truce to tears :
The fiery heart of lovers hath great scorn
Of fate and fortune. Haply mid the spheres,

Whereof they speak in mysteries, are born
Men ever fair and ageless. Let that be.—
Methought in dreams I wrestled yester-morn,

A greybeard, with a youngster, I with thee :
I stumbled and was bound, a bruisèd man,
Thy captive glorying in captivity.

This is a parable which I will plan,
For men of after-time to muse upon,
In Parian marble or Pentelican.

Now let us rise. The sun that erewhile shone,
Glistening from beaten gold and bearded breast
Of Zeus, slants sea-ward. Honey-pale and wan

Are all the polished ivory brows that rest
Their weight of thought around the Thunderer's throne.
Fain would I gaze far out into the west

From some bare mountain-summit. Go, my son ;
Leave me awhile to wander. Ere midnight
Seek me beside the solitary stone
That knows the secret of my soul's delight.

THE LOVE TALE OF ODATIS

AND

PRINCE ZARIADRES.

THE DREAM OF ODATIS.

Odatis, daughter of the Scythian king,
Lay in her ivory chamber wondering
What pleasant sight the morrow's sun would bear
To make the April of her life more fair.
Then as she thought thereon her lashes fell
Over her grey eyes, and she slumbered well ;
Nor dreamed therewith ; but when the moon outworn
Waned on the pearly limits of the morn,
Then through her sleep the flocks of dreams like rain
Fell on her troubled sense and stirred her brain.
And first through many a twilight labyrinth
Of starry wind-flower and wild hyacinth
Listless she wandered, and the heaven o'erhead
Was to her soul a prison blank and dead ;
Nor heard she sound of song, nor was the earth
For all the brightness of its bloomy birth
Glad to her eyes ; but all she looked upon
Seemed as the face of one with sorrow wan.
Yet even so the vision changed : the wood
Faded from out her memory, and she stood

In purple princely splendour throned on high
To watch the pomp of armies marching by ;
And in her breast her heart leaped, for the show
Filled her with trembling such as lovers know.
And first came youths upon the flowery way
Thick strewn with silk and boughs of conquering bay ;
Garlands they wore of violets, and their eyes
Sparkled like stars that stud December skies,
While with puffed cheeks and lips whereon the down
Of boyhood lingered, through the startled town
They blew the silver sound of clarions wreathed
Into strange circles serpentine, or breathed
Through flutes melodious heraldings whereby
Trembling the maiden felt that Love was nigh.
Nor might she pause to think ; for now the tread
Of elephants with vine leaves garlanded
Went crushing blossoms with huge feet ; their grey
Lithe trunks were curled to snuff the scents of May,
And on their castled backs and shoulders vast
Flamed cressets ; on the live coals negroes cast
Spices of myrrh and frankincense, and boys
Like naked Cupids made a merry noise
Swinging from flank and dewlap, showering spray
Of cakes and comfits from gilt quivers gay.
Next came the priests, entoning as they went
Praises and prayers—their dusky foreheads bent
Beneath the weight of mitres stiff with gems ;
And on their breasts and on the broidered hems
Of their loose raiment glittered runes that none

Might read, so far ago in ages gone
By men whose very memories are flown
Were those strange legends wrought in tongues unknown.
Behind them followed oxen white as snow,
Large-limbed, with meek eyes wild and round and slow;
Lowing they went, and girls beside them held
Red rosewreaths on their necks and shoulders belled
With golden bubbles. After, in long line,
Passed princely youths on horses ; red as wine
Was all their raiment, and the steeds they rode
Like thunder-clouds in tawny splendour glowed.
Ah ! then she trembled ! on her soul there fell
Even in dreams a swift fire terrible !
For towering o'er the brows of all that band,
Throned on a car, guiding great steeds, did stand
One who with fixed eyes gazed on only her :
And as he drew anigh, still goodlier
Than all those youths he shone; and still more near,
Her spirit shivered with delicious fear;
For on her face his eyes stayed, and his breast,
Whiter than moonlight, heaved with wild unrest;
And all about his brows and glorious eyes
The golden tresses gleamed like live sunrise ;
And as at last beneath her seat he came,
She heard the heralds shout an unknown name—
Prince Zariadres !—and he rose, and she
Dared not or could not shrink, for utterly
Her soul with love was shattered, and his mouth,
Panting, half open, dry with eager drowth,

Disclosed beneath her lips ; and so it seemed
That even as she struggled and still dreamed,
That show and all those sights faded, and he
With strong arms clasping strained her stormfully
To his broad bosom.—Then she woke, and wan
With joy, still felt his living mouth upon
Her quivering lips ; and lo ! the dream was gone !

Afar across the steppes and rolling sea
Of grassy waves the sun rose royally,
Shooting his shafts aloft and stirring all
Glad creatures to the new day's festival.
But on her couch Odatis lingered ; still
Within her bosom heaved her heart, and shrill
To her tense ears sounded the faint lark's song :
Nor knew she well thus lying how the long
Minutes crept over her, for she was fain
To hoard the fragments of her dream, and pain
Troubled her heart for thought that day must be
Unsunned by that brief night's felicity.
Then came her maidens to her, they who grew
Around her youth as lilies white and blue
Bloom round the queen rose, and they bade her rise,
Saying : the sun rides high in the mid skies.

So she arose ; and on her cheek the flush
Was as the bloom of roses when they blush
In summer sunset : sandalled then and clad
In silks whereof the pearly sheen displayed

Hues like the hearts of opals, blue and red
Mingling with subtly woven silver thread,
Forth to the close she fared, where by a rill
The grass was strewn with wind-stirred daffodil
And pale narcissus ; apple trees o'erhead
Their lichen-hoary twisted branches spread,
And at their feet flowered violets: there the sod
Was very soft and smooth, by sandals trod
Of sauntering maidens, swept by silken trains,
And kindly nursed by gentle April rains—
An unshorn meadow sward, whereon at play
Odatis with her virgins passed the day.
There tales were told and shrill songs sung whereof
The one recurring burden still was love :
Yet was Odatis sad, and none might stir
With jest or smile the cloud that troubled her,
Nor would she weave the dance or throw the ball,
But mute and pensive, in despite of all
The innocent wiles of maiden wooings, lay
As though she recked not of the sweet spring day.
Then when noon wore at length to dewy eve,
And tired with sport those damsels fain would leave
Their garden for the houseroof, from her bed
Of grass and flowers Odatis leaned and said :

'O, tell me, maidens, what mysterious thing
Hath stirred my spirit with strange quivering !
I slept ; I dreamed ; and lo ! the morrow seems
A sad sweet echo of melodious dreams.

Still in mine eyes a face burns, and a cry
Of words I know not throbs and passes by.
I start, I blush, I tremble, I desire—
New joys untasted with a secret fire
Consume me, so that all that heretofore
I loved flits phantomlike on a far shore,
And what I love not, know not, cannot tell,
Allures and frets me with a steady spell.
I am undone with sweetness—fain would fly
Far off into yon spheres of saffron sky
And perish—ah ! not perish—not alone—
I know not what I say, what breath upon
My lips e'en now hath fallen, what soft thrill
Bids me abide and yearn and languish still—
For nothing ? or for what ?—dear maidens, say
Why seems it to me that a single day
Hath set between that shore of life and this
Waves ruder than the rush of Tanais ? '

' Thou hast felt Love in Sleep : he still is fain
To whisper music to a slumbering brain.'
' Love ! what is Love? To be fantastical
For forms and phantoms—on my knees to fall
And pray kind sleep to take my soul and give
One long delicious dream, that I may live
Mid unsubstantial shadows—to turn pale,
To flush, to throb, to faint, to sigh, to quail,
To glow in ice, to freeze in fire, to hate
The light of day and all things delicate

That are not dreams—oh ! is this Love ? I thought
That Love was something sure and steady wrought
Into the very heaven of life, and set
Mid stars the soul shall nevermore forget !
Is he a thing of visions ?'
'Nay,' cried she,
The girl whom maidens called Earinè,
'I know not Love ; I dream not ; yet I know
By words that fall upon the ear like snow
On sleepy house roofs, by faint flower-scent,
By songs of birds with lustrous twilight blent,
By heavy-headed roses, and wide eyes
Of young men gazing in a still surprise,
By tremblings when a hand upon my hand
Lingers and mute lips quiver and feet stand
Fixed in unwilling wilfulness to stay
As though they fain would stir not night or day,—
Surely by signs and tokens like to these
I know Love is some subtle sweet disease,
Some fire that frets and soothes, some frost that chills
And stings the spirit with delicious thrills.
And thou too lovest ; doubt not, thou hast seen,
I thou the simple truth wouldst tell, fair queen,
In sleep some god who wooed thee ! Wait and be
Cradled in honey-sweet expectancy :
For surely like a mist of golden rain
Or dew descending, he will come again ;
And by thy side perchance, no more a shade,
The very life of Cupid shall be laid,

As erst by Psyche's ere she dared to see
What Love would hide from dull mortality.'

'So be it!' sighed Odatis. Then she wen
For now the skirts of night were starry sprent,
Forth to her chamber, and but little slept,
For still her heart sweet bitter converse kept.

THE DREAM OF ZARIADRES.

The selfsame night Odatis dreamed her dream,
Prince Zariadres by the silver stream
Choaspes slept: far down the stainless tide
Mid flowering reeds and fragrant rushes sighed;
And o'er the open window its broad roof
An immemorial cedar spread moon-proof,
Where nestled nightingales and where the shine
Like live fire went of clematis and vine.
Asleep he lay—the seed, so story ran,
Of Aphrodite and no mortal man
But mystic Thammuz; yea, his cheek and chin,
Whereon the golden down of youth was thin,
And his fierce eyes and amorous spake him sprung
Of gods immortal since the world was young.
Asleep he lay: the cedar planks whereof
The walls were wrought, were carved with tales of love;
And on the marble floor thick quilted fur
Slumbered, brown sable and rare minever.

Thereon huge hounds of chase lay curled, and bright
Beside his pillow in the dim starlight
Shone hunting spear and broad blade and such gear
As woodmen don to drive the flying deer.
But Zariadres sleeping dreamed not yet
Of horn or hound or thicket boar-beset ;
Nay, nothing dreamed ; until what time the light
Of dawn upon the ocean edge was white,
Dame Venus, so his dream ran, filled the house
With pleasant sounds and flower-scents amorous.
Then as he lay and listened, lo ! the beat
Of rhythmically moving maiden feet
Fell on his ear, and laughter grew, and wide
His chamber door flew open, and the tide
Of lute and viol wavelike filled the room
With music married to the wild perfume
Of virgin voices ; and while still the sea
Of gathering gaining golden melody
O'erflowed his senses, by the bed there stood
Dame Venus—as erewhile in mocking mood
From wavelets Cytherean and white foam
Naked she rose beneath heaven's azure dome,
So by his bedside smiling with strange wiles
Hid in the subtle dimplings of her smiles,
Stayed she ; and roses like a ruddy mist,
With violets deep and dim as amethyst,
Rained round her : then from forth the flowers there shone—
As from pink clouds the sunk sun smiles upon,

Love's white star shines—a trembling maiden, clad
In splendour of such light the lilies had
In Eden ; and the youth who looked at her,
Felt the still fountains of his spirit stir
With some new bliss untasted. Venus cried :
' Behold, O Zariadres ! 'tis thy bride,
Odatis, daughter of a race of kings,
Thy mother to thy breast in slumber brings !
Arise, and clasp her ! '
Then he rose and flung
His arms around the shade and clasped and clung.
Ah me ! the treachery of dreams ! Sleep flies,
And straining wide expectant eager eyes,
Whose lips are these with thirsty lips he kisses
As though he would uproot their blooming blisses ?
Poor Zaffir, foster-brother, page, with whom
He beats the thicket side from dawn till gloom,
Stands in his locked arms, wondering, laughing, cool,
With crisp curls dripping from the crystal pool,
Where he has bathed and whence he now has run
To rouse his master with the rising sun.

' Who is Odatis, Zaffir ? Tell me, who ?
'Twas now I clasped her to my heart, and you
Came straight between me and my bliss. Oh say
Where dwells my darling ? On what dreamy way
Escaped she through the palace halls, and why
Delayed you not her feet that faster fly
Than woodland fawns or clouds that scud the sky ? '

'O Zariadres ! O my prince ! The night
Hath fooled you with vain visions of delight.
For nought in all your chamber stirred or sped,
While through the door I came, and by your bed
Stood waiting till you woke, and watched the rays
Ruddy upon the cedar boughs and bays
Beneath your window ; and your eager hound
Snuffed the keen air as though he fain would bound
About the upland meadows where we go
Ere noon be full to chase the flying roe.
Then as I stayed, you smiled in sleep and threw
Fond arms about my neck, and drank the dew
Of my poor lips—not as our custom is
To greet the morrow with a brother's kiss,—
But as though life and all that life holds dear
Or fancy feigns were brimmed and chaliced here.'

'Who is Odatis, Zaffir ? In my sleep
Dame Venus spake words soft as winds that sweep
Dim primrose paths in April; for she said :
I bring Odatis to thy marriage bed,
Daughter of kings ; embrace her !—and I laid
My lips upon the fairest lips that maid
E'er lent her lover.'

'Nay, Prince, nought I know.
But rise and don thy raiment : we will go
Down to the court, if haply we may hear
Where dwells Odatis from some traveller.'

Then Zariadres from the coverlid,
That lapped his rosy lustre, sprang, and hid
Those limbs divine in royal weed, and went
With Zaffir to the court-yard. There a tent
Whereof the warp was gold wire, and the woof
A maze of broidered blossoms, made a roof
From morning sunbeams for the prince, and loud
Around him rang the voices of the crowd.
For there upon mosaic paved work stood
Robed in strange wise a restless multitude ;
Merchants from furthest Oxus and from Ind,
Swart faces linen-swathed, o'er whom the wind
Swept musky fragrant ; Arab chiefs with spear
Trembling in sinewy hand, and hunting gear
Slung round broad shoulders ; brawny Æthiop slaves,
With Moors who dive into the deep sea caves
To rob the coral-wreathed Nereides ;
Syrians for whom soft gum-distilling trees
Yield precious spice ; with them a fair-haired band
Of hunters from the free Circassian land,
Bearing good store of furs ; and some had gold
Which with scant cunning from the envious hold
Of Arimaspian griffins they were fain
To wrest, emperilling dear life for gain.
All these and many more whose name and race
Are clean forgotten, filled the open place :
For at this time the custom was each spring
To hold a market for the Persian king ;
That all the rich and rare things that the sun
In his long daily journey looks upon,

Might so to please the monarch's gaze be brought ;
And whatsoe'er seemed good to him was bought
To deck his palace halls, and gold and gem
The treasurer duly weighed and gave to them
Who paid their lord free service. So this day,
When Zariadres took his station, they
Buzzed round him thinking that the royal eyes
Should now be bent to scan their merchandise.
But the Prince called his herald and bade sound
Silence through courts and hall and garden ground ;
And there was silence while the silver call
Of trumpets thrilled the square from wall to wall.
Then Zariadres spake :

'O ye who stand
Around me, if my name from each far land
Hath power to lure you, tell me truth and say
Where dwells Odatis?'

Then he ceased, and they
Kept silence ; but the heralds lifting loud
Their brazen tongues above the listening crowd,
Cried in each several speech of men the same
Challenge : twelve times rang forth the unknown name :
'Where dwells Odatis?' When they ceased, a man
Sprang from the fair-faced crew Circassian,
And cried :

'I know Odatis ! I have seen
The fairest of all maids that bloom between
Ister and Indus, daughter of the king
To whom the Marathi their tribute bring !'

Straight was he taken to the ivory chair
Where sat the Prince ; and an interpreter,
Circassian born, received his speech, and said :

'This man, O Prince, in vales Caucasian bred,
Fareth from farthest Scythia where the tide
Of wintry Tanais flows down dark and wide
To greet the inhospitable sea ; for there
The warlike Marathi yield ware for ware,
Taking soft silks and stuffs from Persian looms
With arabesques embroidered and the blooms
Of summer flowers, but giving furs of price,
And amber sought beneath the hummocked ice
Of frozen northwaves, and pure lumps of gold
From griffin-guarded Ural chasms cold.
There mid the Marathi Odatis dwells,
Fairest of maidens, as mid asphodels
The tall queen lily shineth, or the moon
Mid stars upon a silver night of June :
Daughter and heiress of their king is she,
And now the years of her virginity
Shall soon be ended, for the suitors fill
Her father's halls, free horsemen, swift to spill
Life blood of him who thwarts their fiery will.'

Glad was Prince Zariadres and he cried :

'Nay, but no man shall win her for a bride,
Since mine she is ! Call my ambassadors,

And bid them lade a hundred mules with stores
Of silks and sandalwood and spice and gems :—
Nay, tear the diamonds from my diadems,
That men may marvel when they see the train
Wind over windy steppe and wavy plain
Unto the station of the Scythian king !
There let them leave those goodly things, but bring
Odatis to my chamber : she shall be
Princess of Persia on the throne with me.
And thou, Circassian, take thee gold enow
To live the wealthiest of thy tribe, and go
Forth with my nobles : as thou lov'st thy life
See that thou bring them without let or strife
The straightest road to Tanais ford, and there
Set them before the king's face ! I will wear
The slow weeks here in Susa till ye come
Bearing my Princess to her Persian home.
Nay, Zaffir, go thou too : though loth to part
With thee who still art second to my heart,
Yet swear I none but thou shall plead for me :
Oh, tell her how I clasped thee tenderly
For her sweet sake in dreams, and how I pine
Till the glad days of autumn make her mine.'

OF THE EMBASSY AND HOW IT FARED.

Now there was none in Persia to gainsay
Prince Zariadres : so at break of day

Forth from the palace gates in glittering line
Went mules and camels, with the steely shine
Of spear points quivering round them ; and on high
Neath tents and palanquins that flout the sky,
The pomp of the ambassadors, enfurled
In dusty wreaths the stormful southwind whirled,
Sat solemn-eyed ; and Zaffir with them spent
The long slow hours in dreamy wonderment :
For they by field and forest, plain and sea,
Fared northward day by day unrestingly.
O'er many a desert tract of sand whereon
Glared with unlidded eyes the withering sun,
Mid cities old as time submerged beneath
Their mounded dust in everduring death,
Through cedar forests dark and ominous
Down the dim sides of shadowy Caucasus
Outstretched in black battalions, on and on,
Northward and westward, fared they till the Don,
Swift, broad and swirling, met their eager eyes
One eventide of August 'neath sad skies,
Arched with fire fretwork of fierce clouds that spanned
A brown plain limitless on either hand.

Then with the morrow's light they crossed the ford,
And came unto the castle of the lord
Who kept those marches for the Scythian king ;
Him with fair speech they prayed that he should bring
Their concourse to Omartes—this the name
Of fair Odatis' father. So they came

Ere sunset to the station of the race
Of warlike Marathi—a goodly place,
Not walled, but open to the rolling sea
Of pasture where the milch mares love to be :
For all the wealth of Scythia was in kine
And swift steeds ; nor to plough the yeasty brine
With keels in search of treasure, nor to till
The fat glebe recked they ; but they roamed at will
Over vast billowy tracts of green grass land
Wild as the winds that sweep a stormy strand.
Nathless Omartes, being chief and king
Of this free folk, would rest from wandering
Sometime in his fair palace ; and the maid,
Odatis, went not with the tribe, but stayed
Fenced from all harm in her delicious home.

There month by month like tempest-fretted foam
In squadrons and in armies surged the tide
Of turbulent Scythia, with rude pomp and pride
Wooing the rosecheeked daughter of the chief :
For so 'twas ruled that with the falling leaf
She should be wedded to the lord whose hand
Proved mightiest in the wide Marathian land.
Wherefore with spear and steed caparisoned
As for stern combat, and with Cossacks zoned,
Rode princes hawk-eyed 'neath tempestuous brows ;
And tilts there were and tourneys fit to rouse
Sparks of hot manhood in young hearts, and prove
Who ranged the doughtiest in the lists of love.

Yea but the whole land seethed with stormful strife,
And of the suitors each man held his life
Even in his hand as a vile thing and nought,
Till that Odatis to his tent were brought
After free sentence and the folk's acclaim,
With him to reign queen of the Scythian name.

Thus toward the palace court the Persian train
Grave-eyed and wondering o'er the pathless plain
Wound slowly ; and a thousand eyes afar
Spying their serried phalanx chafed for war :
Then scouts and scudding turms, like wind-writhed sand,
Wheeled round their escort ; and each sinewy hand
Grasped a steel-pointed spear, or whirled a sword,
Or set swift arrows to the glistening cord.
'Peace !' cried the herald : 'foemen none are these,
But bearers of great gifts and embassies
Unto the Scythian from the Persian king !
Hence to the palace courts, or stay and bring
With martial service and high pomp their state
Unto Omartes at the porphyry gate.'
Then was their heat abated ; and some went
Back to the town in cloudy discontent ;
But some around the strangers hovering, viewed
With curious eyes the goodly multitude ;
While others to Omartes came and cried :
'Hither, O King, from sun-struck Persia ride
Grave men with mules well laden, and they say
Their bounden service is to thee this day !'

So at the close of that short day they came
To proud Omartes ; and the steady flame
Of sunset flared on weary brows and eyes
Worn with long travelling under ardent skies.
Large was the court-yard : men and maidens leant
From latticed windows in quick wonderment
To gaze upon those grave ambassadors ;
They grouped around the porphyry palace doors,
Watched the unlading of their mules and chose
Rare gifts and jewelled caskets to unclose
Before the glad eyes of the Scythian king,—
Whispering the while of many a beauteous thing
In speech the Scythians knew not : yet one name
Was frequent on their lips, burning like flame
The ears of pale Odatis ; for she heard
'Prince Zariadres:' and this single word
Leaped in her blood and tingled in her brain,
Stirring her spirit with delicious pain.
Nor knew she well whereof they spake, or why
With gifts so great the grave-eyed embassy
Unto her father's palace halls were come ;
For to all questioning the men were dumb.
Nor to the audience chamber, now that night
Had fallen on field and forest, seemed it right
That those waywearied travellers should fare ;
Therefore Omartes bade his grooms prepare
Meet chambers for the men, and for their train
Of mules and camels pickets on the plain.
So rested they the night; but in her bower

Odatis watched each slowly sliding hour,
Wide-eyed and wondering who and what was he
Whose unknown name controlled her destiny.

With morning on his ivory throne of state
Omartes took his station at the gate
Of porphyry named, and bade his trumpeter
Call the ambassadors that he might hear
What was their errand from the Persian king.
Through court and hall the silver throats 'gan sing
Their tyrannous summons, and the arches rang
With trampling feet and voices and the clang
Of clashed shields. Then the heralds brought the folk
Of Susa to the throne, and Zaffir spoke :
'Hear, King Omartes ! what our Prince decrees—
Prince Zariadres, whom the southern seas
Toward Araby and Ind, the western bound
By rocky Hellas and the garden ground
Of sunburned Syria, the northern grey
'Neath farstretched shadowy Caucasus, obey :
As equal unto equal he doth sue
That thou in lawful wedlock wouldst bestow
Thy daughter, fair Odatis, on his prime
Of princely manhood ; that with him sublime
Upon the throne of Susa she may sway
All nations that the stars of heaven survey.
Nothing he asks, but much therewith he yields—
Rare silks of width to carpet yon green fields
From sunrise unto sundown, glorious gems

Torn from imperial Indian diadems !
Keep thou thy kingdom : nought he recks thereof ;
For he will win and wed a bride for love :
But send thou nobles with thy child to see
How she is throned in Persia royally ;
Or come thyself with us, and be the guest
Of him who in his palm holds East and West.'

Here Zaffir ceased and spread upon the ground
Coffers and caskets ; but the monarch frowned ;
And, ere he spake, fierce murmurs ran around :

'Nay, boy, take hence thy bribes ! none such need we
Yet to thy master say that royally
He woos Odatis ; and for this we give
Thanks—yea, in peace with him we pray to live ;
But for our daughter—chieftains, what say ye ?—
She shall be wedded ere the wild wolds see
December's snowflake, to that Scythian lord
Whose arm is strong to win her with the sword.
For lo ! with her the royal seed decays
In Scythia ; and 'tis ruled that she shall raise
New generations of fierce kings to sway
The Marathi, when we have passed away.'

Scarce had he ceased when cheering clamorous,
Like cries of grappling legions, filled the house ;
But with his hand Omartes bade the folk
Awhile keep silence ; then again he spoke :

'Friends are ye, strangers! yea, and guests, I trow;
Nor from our Scythian station shall ye go
Home to fair Susa till ye learn what skill
In wrestling and in riding we who dwell
On these broad uplands, use with friend and foe.
And forasmuch as all men here shall know
Your lord is our good cousin, I will take
Yon golden beaker bossed with gems to slake
My thirst in winter when the halls are dim,
Drinking deep wassails and high healths to him.'

So said the king; then bade his serving folk
Four black steeds to a Scythian chariot yoke:
Of ivory were the knobs; of brass the ring,
With runes enriched and rude enamelling,
Whereby the horses to the pole were bound;
Of steel the wheel-rims where they grazed the ground;
All else of birchen bark, and osier tough,
And seasoned ash wood, with the rind still rough
Upon the bending branches, so was twined
That the frail fabric seemed a thing the wind
Might play with—stout withal and firm enow
To bear three warriors through the mounded snow.
This for a peace gift to the Persian king
Was given to Zaffir. He much marvelling
To find his words fall like an idle tale
On the proud ears of Scythia, passion-pale,
Yet daring nought that might the wrath arouse
Of those tumultuous chiefs whose iron brows
Hung black with threats, resumed his speech, and said:

'We thank thee, King! Though poorly we have sped,
Yea, though our journey to my Prince will be
But heavy-hearted, yet thy courtesy
Is as a fair well in a thirsty plain.
As thou hast spoken, so will we remain
Thy guests and servants till such time as men
And beasts are rested from their labour; then
To Susa backward must we wend, and say
How ill we fared before thy face this day.'
'So be it!' cried Omartes; and the courts
Rang round him: then he bade that goodly sports
To greet the strangers after Scythian wise
Should fill the day and feast their wondering eyes.

OF ZAFFIR'S CONVERSE WITH ODATIS.

Meanwhile Odatis in her chamber heard
None of these things, albeit the shouts that stirred
The court-yard silence thrilled her ears, and dull
The grudging minutes with slow feet of wool
Passed o'er her throbbing pulses. Then there came
Eariné—her fair face all aflame—
With quick step to the bower, and cried:
'O queen!
The goodliest youth these eyes have ever seen
Woos thee for Zariadres! Gems and gold,
The price of empires, on the pavement rolled
Like stones to tempt Omartes: and he said—

Zaffir his name was—that his lord would wed
None but Odatis, and that thou shouldst be
Throned o'er the Persian folk imperially!'

'What said my sire?'

'Ah, marry, more the grief!
He vowed to wed thee to some Scythian chief:
Whereat thy suitors shouted, but the youth
Who spake for Zariadres, in good sooth,
Albeit his speech fell soft as summer rain,
Flashed such defiance from fierce eyes that bane
Must follow: then Omartes——'

'Prithee, stay
The torrent of thy tongue; this only say,
Came Zariadres with the troop, or where
Abides he?'

'Nay, the Persian envoys fare
Home to their Prince ere August is o'erpast.'

'Go then, Eariné, to Zaffir; cast
Enchantment on the man; and ere day dies
Bring him to meet me far from envious eyes
In the pleached alleys of the orchard: there
Alone will I receive him. And beware
Lest thy tongue, truant to thy faith, betray
Love-lost Odatis!—I meanwhile will pray.'

Eariné made answer:

'O my queen,

Surely another vision thou hast seen :
Yet will I bring the youth '—she blushed, and hung
Her forehead as a rose by southwinds swung—
' For he is gentle, and my spirit tells
He will abide my bidding without spells.'

It was the hour of evening when Love's star
Trembling upon the melancholy bar
Of sunset, melts young hearts, and Love is nigh
In all the saffron spaces of the sky.
Swift flew the stream ; the drooping apple boughs
Glassed in its arrowy argent, framed dim brows,
Mist-wreathed with maiden tresses, of the queen,
Who stayed, a glimmering phantom, on the green :
Beneath her skirts the grass was dewy wet—
Not now with daffodil and violet,
But with pale lilac crocus flowers o'erbloomed,
Sad stars of autumn ; and the air, perfumed
No more with April blossoms, held the scent
Of fruits autumnal ; heavy branches bent
Their golden freightage of ripe spheres to greet
Even the kisses of her dainty feet.

Thither came Zaffir, whom Eariné
Drew through the twilight very silently.
Like moving mist they came the boughs between ;
For both were clad in robes of filmy green,
Mocking the mossed trunks with like coloured hues
The fleet-foot fairies in their revels use.

Nor of their coming was Odatis ware ;
Till by her side Eariné stood fair
As summer twilight, pointing to the boy,
Whose lustrous eyes trembling with some strange joy,
Shone like twin stars descended from the sky
Obedient to a wizard's witchery.
Odatis blushed and started ; then she laid
Her finger on her lip, and whispering bade
Eariné to keep close watch and ward,
While she to Zaffir low-voiced :

'Is thy lord
Prince Zariadres ?'

Here her woman's tongue
Faltered, and on her breast her fair head hung,
Till Zaffir's voice, like pleasing melody,
Startled the starry silence :

'I am he
Whom Zariadres sends to sue for thee !
Yet nought herein we prosper, for the king
Frowns on our suit and scorns the gifts we bring.
Ah, lady ! couldst thou see my Prince, or hear
His accents softer than the winds that stir
Rose-bowers of Shiraz ! couldst thou feel the flame
That flashed from his fierce brows when first thy name
Fell on his dreaming senses, and he cried,
Flinging himself from slumber—who doth hide
Odatis from me, Zaffir ? I have seen
Even in sleep the phantom of my queen !
Who is Odatis, Zaffir ? Tell me how

She from the chamber glided? Even now
Within these arms I held her! hie thee hence,
Swift as love-thoughts; with gentle vehemence
Persuade her to be piteous, for I die
Without the light of her felicity!—
Nay, marvel not, my Princess! deign to hear
Things true though strange: for when the dawn was clear
On that faint April morning, to his bed
Venus, celestial mother, so 'tis said,
Of Zariadres, brought thee fairer far
Than is the trembling of yon silvern star,
Either in dreams, or, as a goddess can,
Thy very self dissevered from the ban
Of frail mortality, and smiled, and cried—
Take her, my son, yea, take thy royal bride,
Odatis, daughter of a thousand kings!
Whereat the Prince, sleep-startled, stirs and flings
Wild arms around a phantom, straining eyes
In weary widowhood on the blank skies:
Yet in his ear thy name thrills, and he knows
That truth abides in visions, ere the close
Of sleep fast following on the skirts of morn:
Therefore by faith and honour he hath sworn
To wed thee only, or for thee to waste
Reft of the bliss that none but lovers taste.'

'In dreams, O Zaffir? when the night forlorn
Faints in the fierce embraces of the morn?
In April, saidst thou?—Deem me not o'erbold

To quit my coy retirement and the cold
Cloisters of shy concealment !—nay, I shrink
And tremble virginlike upon the brink
Of perilous parley !—Yet even so to me
Athwart the mists of slumber royally
Rode one I knew not ; on his face was flame
To stir my spirit, and his whispered name
So bowed and bound me that I rose and sware,
Weeping within these orchard alleys fair,
That henceforth I would wed no living wight ;
Since only Zariadres and the might
Of his great goodliness could charm my sight.'

She ceased, and like to one with toil forspent
Sank on the flowery meadow : dew-besprent
Were those calm cups, matching her cheeks whereon
Mid blushes like faint pearls her shy tears shone.
But Zaffir smiled and triumphed : 'Surely here
Is love, god-guided, strong to cast out fear !
Not without fate, nay by the will, sweet queen,
Of powers celestial were these visions seen.
Therefore arise, and give good counsel ; say
How shall we bear thee to thy lord away ?
For lo ! in Susa trembling, aching, still
He sees the Orient skies each morrow fill
With light he loves not, wearing weary life
In fruitless sighing and unceasing strife,
Till thou arise upon his heavens, and be
The sunlight of his soul's felicity ! '

Long lay Odatis speechless : then she rose,
And pacing slowly through the orchard close,
Spake many words with Zaffir, while she wove
A mesh of cunning schemes to cradle love.

'Haste to thy lord and mine ! for ere the spring
Clothe field and forest with enamelling
Of frail May flowers, he from my father's hall
Shall bear his Scythian bride, a willing thrall.
Meanwhile, if in this heart and brain be skill
To work Omartes to his daughter's will—
As well I reckon he will nought refuse
To wiles and woven charms that women use—
I will provide that on the rolling plain
The snows shall melt and grass be green again,
Ere in these palace halls I yield my hand
To suitor of the wild Marathian land.
But on the verge of April we will call
A day for sacrifice and festival,
When I will swear in Jove's high fane to choose
My husband with such rites the Scythians use,
Giving the golden cup and by the sun
Plighting a troth that shall not be undone !
This part be mine ! Let Zariadres come
And claim Odatis in her Scythian home !'

So spake the Princess : and much more she said
Of wiles whereby the Persians might be led

Through the Marathian outposts in the dress
Of warriors from the western wilderness.
Then for that now black night had fallen, and fair
Above the palace through translucent air
Streamed lights auroral—a celestial sea
Of blood that ebbed and flowed unceasingly—
Sighing Odatis turned, and like a wraith
Scarce seen in sleep by one that sorroweth,
Beneath those wonders of the skies she went,
Wild hope within her heart with sorrow blent.

HOW ZARIADRES WON ODATIS.

Fierce winter fell ; and on the Scythian plain
By sleety whirlwind and frore hurricane
A world of white was huddled : ridged and grey
Neath scowling skies the mounded snowdrifts lay ;
And like a vault of steel, thick-ribbed and cold,
Hung the rough ice beneath whose arches rolled
Wild Tanais with waves that chafed in vain,
Grinding their granite bed in voiceless pain.
Within her ivory hall as weeks stole by,
Odatis mid her maidens dreamily
Wiled the long days with talk and song and jest,
Stirring the spirit of a soft unrest
In all her aching veins ; for they would tell
Of love and many a midnight miracle
Wrought mid far races in forgotten times

For lovers : much she heard of southern climes
From Greekish damsels and from darkeyed maids,
Syrian or Persian; how the amaranth glades
In Shiraz and in Susa all the year,
Embowered in bays and laurels never sere,
With rose-bloom flourish, and the sun doth smile
Eternal summer on flower-circled isle,
Samos, or Rhodes, or Lesbos, or the shine
Of Paros white mid wavelets sapphirine.
Then when night came, and north winds on the wold
Wailed like were wolves, she in the silken fold
Of slumber lapped from sadness smiling dreamed ;
Till in her dream Prince Zariadres seemed
With her in Junes eternal and the bliss
Of summery cedar-shaded loveliness
To drink dear love and life ; and she would cry
Even in sleep—' The silent minutes fly;
The days and weeks like drifting snowflakes hover
Bearing on wings of hurrying time my lover !
Lo, even now perchance where pine trees frown
Beneath the ice-bound awful airy crown
Of Caucasus, by Caspian waves that eat
For very rage their barren beach, his feet
Fret the rough way, and Love doth lead him on !
And now his chariot spurns the frozen Don !
And now he clasps me ! '—Startled then from sleep
She watched the melancholy winter heap
Snows upon snows ; and joy seemed far, and bare
Were earth and heaven within the loveless air.

So slumber with frail hope and flying bliss
Fed her young soul ; but waking wretchedness
Consumed her, and life daily grew to be
A trance of dreadful drear expectancy.
Nor came there any sign ; nor might she hear
From wandering merchant or lone traveller
Aught from the wished-for southlands ; for the hand
Of winter lay like iron on all the land,
And silence round her brooded, and the spring
Was as an unimaginable thing.

Then came the day when in Omartes' hall
The Scythian suitors called to festival,
Should at the king's throne swear fresh fealty ;
That so the maid Odatis might be free
To choose her bridegroom, and by love's award
O'er the proud Marathi to make him lord.
From all the realm the royal kith and kin,
Rulers and princes, kings and mighty men,
Met in the palace : wassail all day long
With pompous sacrifice and solemn song
Filled a full month: yet never through the throng
Shone the keen eyes of Zaffir, or the grace
Of Zariadres on the eager face
Of desolate Odatis; but she sighed:
'He hath forgotten ! Surely by the tide
Of smooth Choaspes with another maid
He sees the laughing lips of summer laid
On thorp and meadow, while for me remain

Nought but these windy steppes and barren plain,
Where I shall perish !'
Thin and pale and wan,
Yet like a lily fair to look upon,
She went her ways on duteous service bent,
Veiling her sorrow in a sad content.

Till now the tables in the hall were set,
And on the king's enamelled carcanet
Neath blazing torches shone barbaric gems ;
While round the board a hundred diadems
Crowned savage brows and fiery eyes and hair
Of fierce chiefs flaunting on broad shoulders bare.
Through roof and fretted rafter shrilled the loud
Singing and harping of a minstrel crowd,
Praising the great deeds of the mighty hand
Of him who swayed the wild Marathian land.
Then as they sat and drank and wine began
With madness to inflame each fiery man,
Omartes called his daughter, and her name
Ran round the echoing walls like living flame ;
For as amid her maidens rosy red,
Robed in grey samite, bending her fair head,
Up the long hall she paced, one cry arose
Of 'Hail Odatis !' and the brazen blows
Of armed heels on the paved work smitten, sent
Clamour across the wilderness that blent
With the fierce tumult of the winds at war.
Then spake Omartes :

'Lo, from near and far
Thy suitors, daughter! Long have I delayed,
Fooled by the trifling of a timid maid.
Take now thy choice: stout men are these and good
To be the fathers of a kingly brood:
Fear not that I shall balk thee; look around;
Be fancy-free: his forehead shall be crowned,
To whom thou yieldest on this night of Jove
The golden goblet as thy pledge of love.'

Odatis took the beaker: then she stood
Amid those eager eyes in yearning mood,
As one who fain would loiter on the way
To lifelong prison in mid month of May.
With parted lips and eyes that seemed to see
Beyond the bourne of frail mortality,
At gaze she stood, nor shrank, but searched the room,
If haply somewhere between glare and gloom
Her lover lingered: but no shape supreme,
Like to the splendour of her April dream,
Flashed on those aching eyeballs: then she bent
Her forehead in forlorn discouragement;
And beckoning Eariné, along
The blazing banquet mid the shouting throng
Passed to the altar of great Jove, and there
Knelt in profound astonishment of prayer,
Straining wild eyes and eager hands and breast
That surged and billowed with pangs half suppressed.
Then rising on the altar step she stayed,

And slowly mixed the ruddy wine, and laid
Fresh incense on the flames that leaped to sup
The grape juice foaming in the glittering cup.
As in a dream, with gold-enwoven hair
Around her marble shoulders, statue-fair,
With tears upon her cheeks, and feet that grew
Unto the senseless stone, and fading hue,
Lingering and loth to leave, she stayed, nor heard
How in the hall the lords wine-valiant stirred
Vain echoes—nay, heard nought, but seemed to be
Asleep and cradled in some mystery :
Till raising weary eyes as one for whom
All life is but a hurrying to the tomb,
She saw beside her strong and still a man
Clad in the travelling garb Marathian ;
Grey was his tunic and his broad hat fell
Over the radiant brows she knew so well ;
Yea, and clear eyes on hers were fixed, as when
In visions of the night o'er marching men
She watched One chariot-throned, and heard the cry
Of heralds shouting as they trampled by.
As then in dreams, so now in waking truth
The yearning souls flew forth of maid and youth,
Met in mid air, and mingled, and no part
For doubt or dread remained in either heart.
He whispered : but his speech was nought but this :
'Odatis ! I have found thee ! O my bliss !
Even as thou said'st, here am I ; give to me
The cup of gold ! '

He ceased, and smiled ; but she
Poured the red wine upon the flames, and turned ;
And while the ruddy tongues of fire still burned,
Gave him the cup ; and from the altar they,
Like visions of the night or phantoms grey,
Stole with quick step unquestioned. Venus laid
A wondrous silver mist o'er youth and maid ;
And in the ears of all the Scythian kings
A sound of flutings and sweet carollings
Sang through the night, and held their charmèd sense ;
So that when morning through dim vapours dense
Peered weeping with southwinds, they rubbed wide eyes
And stared astonied at the vacant skies.
But of their wrath those lovers nothing knew ;
For four black Scythian chargers snorting drew
Their light car through the snow-sprent wilderness
That bridged the wasteful waves of Tanais.
There as they passed, the south wind swelled and rain
Fell with warm gusts upon the steaming plain :
Deep in his bed the mad stream stirred and shook
His frosty chains ; then wildly bounding broke
The prison-arch of ice, and thundering o'er
The huddling havock, surged on either shore,
Spreading a wilderness of flood wherethrough
No wight alive might fare while spring was new.

Thus passed Odatis : like a dream she went
With him who was her dream ; and wonderment
Filled either bosom, feeling that the bliss

Of visionary slumber matched with this
Was as an idle shadow. But behind,
She left a memory frail as woven wind ;
For none knew how she fared or whither passed,
But some averred that Jove himself had cast
That silvery vapour round the saintly maid,
That she, transported to the Elysian glade,
Might meet the loves of mighty gods and be
Mother of heroes through eternity.

Not this her fate ; but by the whispering tide
Choaspes 'neath the cedar shade, a bride,
With him she loved to wander. Story saith
That they were lovers till the hour of death :
And where on palace wall or pictured shrine
The tales of ancient happy lovers shine,
In gilded sandal-wood or ivory stained
With hues of rose and saffron deep-engrained,
There smiles Odatis and her Persian lord
High on the Scythian car o'er steppe and sward
Swiftly careering ; while behind them, bright
As lesser lamps that gem the vaults of night,
Eariné and Zaffir through the foam
Of windy Tanais from Omartes' home
Prick their free steeds, and Cupid o'er them hovers
Lighting with torch benign the flying lovers.

SONNETS.

INTELLECTUAL ISOLATION.

I.

I WILL out-soar these clouds, and shake to nought
The doubts that daunt my spirit : that is free,
Invincible by death or destiny ;
Nor need she take of love or friendship thought.
Self-centred, self-sustained, self-guided, fraught
With fervour of the brain enlightening me,
Alone with God upon a shoreless sea,
I'll find what men in crowds have vainly sought.
I am at one with solitude, and loathe
The tumult of those hopes and fears that fret
Weak hearts in throbbing bosoms. Haply yet
Some Titan vice or virtue shall unclothe
Her mighty limbs for my sole sight, and I,
Sufficing to myself and wisdom, die.

II.

The world of human woe and weal I shun,
Not forasmuch as I despise the joy
That lightens when life wakes in girl or boy,
And glittering sands through passion's hour-glass run:
Of mortal joys there is not anyone
But I have made it for myself the toy
Of fancy, nor hath love had power to cloy
Him who leaves all the deeds of love undone.
Despair of full fruition drives me hence,
Uncomforted to seek repose in God:
Those tyrannous desires that stung my sense
At every turn upon the road I trod,
Seek their assuagement in a sphere where nought
Dares to dispute the sovereignty of thought.

III.

Nay, soul, though near to dying, do not this!
It may be that the world and all its ways
Seem but spent ashes of extinguished days,
And love the phantom of imagined bliss:
Yet what is man among the mysteries
Whereof the young-eyed angels sang their praise?
Thou know'st not. Lone and wildered in the maze,
See that life's crown thou dost not idly miss.
Is friendship fickle? Hast thou found her so?
Is God more near thee on that homeless sea
Than by the hearths where children come and go?
Perchance some rotten root of sin in thee
Hath made thy garden cease to bloom and glow:
Hast thou no need from thine own self to flee?

IV.

Couldst thou clasp God apart from man, or dwell
Merged in the ocean of that infinite good
Where truth and beauty are beatitude,
This earth might well appear a living hell, .
The prison of damned spirits that rebel,
Matched with thy paradise of solitude :
Nathless it is not clasping God to brood
Upon thine own delusive dreams ; the cell
Built by an anchorite that strives with fate
And kindly fellow feeling, may be found
Like to a maniac's chamber, when too late,
Abandoned to his will, without or sound
Or sight of men his brethren, on the ground
He lies, and all his life is desolate.

V.

It is the centre of the soul that ails :
We carry with us our own heart's disease ;
And craving the impossible, we freeze
The lively rills of love that never fails.
What faith, what hope will lend the spirit sails
To waft her with a light spray-scattering breeze
From this Calypso isle of phantasies,
Self-sought, self-gendered, where the daylight pales ?
Where wandering visions of foregone desires
Pursue her sleepless on a stony strand ;
Instead of stars the bleak and baleful fires
Of vexed imagination, quivering spires
That have nor rest nor substance, light the land,
Paced by lean hungry men, a ghostly band !

VI.

Oh that the waters of oblivion
Might purge the burdened soul of her life's dross,
Cleansing dark overgrowths that dull the gloss
Wherewith her pristine gold so purely shone !
Oh that some spell might make us dream undone
Those deeds that fret our pillow, when we toss
Racked by the torments of that living cross
Where memory frowns, a grim centurion !
Sleep, the kind soother of our bodily smart,
Is bought and sold by scales-weight ; quivering nerves
Sink into slumber when the hand of art
Hath touched some hidden spring of brain or heart :
But for the tainted will no medicine serves ;
The road from sin to suffering never swerves.

VII.

What skill shall anodyne the mind diseased ?
Did Rome's fell tyrant cure his secret sore
With those famed draughts of cooling hellebore ?
What opiates on the fiends of thought have seized ?
This fever of the spirit hath been eased
By no grave simples culled on any shore ;
No surgeon's knife, no muttered charm, no lore
Of Phœbus Paian have those pangs appeased.
Herself must be her saviour. Side by side
Spring poisonous weed and helpful antidote
Within her tangled herbage ; lonely pride
And humble fellow-service ; dreams that dote,
Deeds that aspire ; foul sloth, free labour : she
Hath power to choose, and what she wills, to be.

FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, AND DEATH.

I.

FRIENDSHIP and Love I met upon a day :
  The one was clad in weeds of russet brown ;
  The other on his forehead wore a crown,
And all his raiment sparkled like the May.
Friendship cried to me with a kind voice 'Stay !'
  And well I knew her tender tones and mild ;
  But Love had caught me like a careless child,
And spread his wings and carried me away.
Then though I saw poor Friendship far below
  Wringing her hands and sobbing all in vain,
  I could but smile nor could I soothe her pain ;
For Love still bore me, as strong winds that blow
Bear withered leaves, and still Love whispered low
  'Heed not her cries, for we will come again.'

II.

Lady, when first the message came to me
Of thy great hope and all thy future bliss,
I had no envy of that happiness
Which sets a limit to our joy in thee :
But uttering orisons to gods who see
Our mortal strife, and bidding them to bless
With increase of pure good thy goodliness,
I made unto the mild Mnemosyne
More for myself than thee one prayer—that when
Our paths are wholly severed, and thy years
Glide among other cares and far off men,
She may watch over thee, as one who hears
The music of the past, and in thine ears
Murmur 'They live and love thee now as then.'

III.

Alas ! nor Love nor Friendship hath the thews
To strive with stubborn Death : though Death be thin,
The wraith and phantom of forgiven sin ;
While they are tinted with the morning hues
Of God's own glory, dropping roseate dews
On hearts and homes of faith-regenerate men !—
Nor friend nor wedded lover thee may win
Back from Death's sable cypressed avenues.
Therefore my song is stilled : for nought remains
To comfort Love and Friendship but mute Hope ;
Pale Hope, who seated by Death's willow, strains
Sad eyes upon Heaven's unascended cope,
Sighing 'The starry summits upward slope
Toward God for ever ; wait ; 'tis there she reigns.'

A DREAM.

Ἐν ὀμματων ἀχηνίαις.

I YEARN for you, my dearest ; for you came
In visions of the night and stood by me :
I took your hand, and set you on my knee,
And stroked your hair, and drank the sunny flame
Of your large eyes : I kissed your cool moist lips,
And laid your cheek to mine, and asked you why
You stayed so long away ; for lovers die
In one short week of waiting, tears eclipse
The moonlight of their eyes, where hope hath lit
Radiance reflected from the brows they love :
And then you laughed, and playful seemed to prove
Whether or no I loved you, frowned and knit
Brows all unused to anger, smiled again,
And nestled to my side and breathed away my pain.

And then I woke. The dazzling summer sun
Shot fiery arrows through the hot white blind,
Withering the dream for which my spirit pined,
Urging me up life's weary race to run.
And you were gone. Oh, why did cruel sleep
Show me my darling to confuse the morrow
With sweetest recollection steeped in sorrow?
Might I not plod along the road and keep
My recreant thoughts from banished Paradise?
Might I not glue my face to books, or fast
Till long oblivion sealed the erring past?
Oh, it is hard! Prayer, penance, sacrifice
Must slowly wipe away short sleep's delight,
And years repair the ruin of a night.

IN ABSENCE.

I.

It irks me that the currents of my mind
Indifferent images with subtle art
Huddle like leaves tossed by the winter wind
Profuse and frequent, while my careful heart
Seeks, craving, through the wilderness of change
The face she longs for—sadly and in vain
Arrests the empty shadows as they range,
Finding no comfort. On the steadfast brain
A thousand forms are printed, features caught
From pictures, travels, and the dreams of night;
Each clear and perfect, some with terror fraught,
Some sad, some common, some divinely bright;
But nowhere in the visionary train
Shinest thou, my queen, to smile away my pain.

II.

Dearest, why can I not behold thy face
When dreary distance makes me yearn and pine?
I muse and muse, each several feature trace,
And draw again each well remembered line.
But when I fain would see thee as thou art,
The dream dissolves; I have no power to bind
These separate recollections, or impart
Thy soul's life to the shadows of my mind.
Eyes, lips, and brow, soft cheek, and braided hair,
I see them all; for one by one they glide
Into my memory, and vanish there,
Leaving my seeking soul unsatisfied.
Thus doth Love cheat us with an empty show,
Concealing that which we most wish to know.

III.

Love cheats himself too greedily discerning
Each separate sweet of that which he adores;
And, line by line, the form of beauty learning,
Forgets the pictured whole on which he pores.
Thus he divides what he should unify:
Too much division doth confuse the soul,
Dissolves the subtle spirit's entity,
And gives the parts where we would have the whole—
Like cracked unequal mirrors which reveal
The forehead here, and here the lip discover;
Or like the ruffled stream which still did steal
His proper image from the poor self-lover;
Or like the minds of men who feebly clasp
Now this, now that, the great All never grasp.

TWO SONNETS OF UNREST.

WHAT of the night? Upon the western bar
A white light lingers; and the East is grey
Not yet with risings of the wished-for day,
Nor yet the glimmering of the herald star
Sheds hope, however faint and frail and far:
Still ringed around with gloom we sit and say,
What of the night? Still wrestle we as they
Who wage with shapes of fever fruitless war.
For weariness our very souls expire,
For watching and for waiting. Is there worse
Torment than this of ours, for whom no fire
Of Hell is lighted; but our barren curse
Is summed in one inexorable verse—
That without hope we languish in desire?

Happy were they who fought with beasts and fell
Bloodstained on sand beneath the lion's paw :
Heaven open with untroubled eyes they saw,
And through the fierce assembly's savage yell
Heard symphonies of angels. It was well
Thus daring nobly for the better law,
To march into the wide and ravening maw
Of mere material death unterrible.
But we who strike at shadows, we who fight
With yielding darkness and with thin night-air,
Who shed no blood, who see no hideous sight,
For whom no heaven is opened—our despair
And utter desolation infinite
Can find nor calm nor comfort anywhere.

AN OLD GORDIAN KNOT.

I.

Between those men of old who nothing knew,
  But sang their song and cried the world is fair,
  Or dreamed a dream of heaven to cheat despair,
  Piling void temples neath the voiceless blue,
And those for whom with revelation due
  Pure wisdom and the lore of all things good
  May yet be granted in the plenitude
  Of ages still to come and æons new,
Stand we who, knowing, yet know nought : undone
  Is all the fabric of that former dream ;
  Those songs we have unlearned, and, one by one,
Have tossed illusions down the shoreless stream ;
  Tearless and passionless we greet the sun,
  And with cold eyes gaze on a garish gleam.

II.

I stood at sunrise on an Alpine height
Whence plains were visible, and the domed sky
Spread vacant in serene immensity ;
Westward beneath my feet curled vapours white,
And grew and gathered, while the East was bright :
Then as the silver wreaths clomb silently,
Methought a shadowy giant steeple-high
Towered up above me ringed with radiant light.
Standing he bore the shape of me who stood
Sole on that summit; yea, he bowed or rose,
Beckoned or threatened, as my varying mood
Constrained his movement ; till the light that grew,
Wrought from the strife of clouds supreme repose,
And heaven once more was still and stainless blue.

III.

Then in my soul I cried : even such is God—
Made in our image, fashioned in our form,
Woven on the vapours of the secular storm,
Where spirit stirred not, nay nor Seraph trod :
He framed no Adam from the plastic clod,
No Eve for Adam's helpmate ; but this worm,
Spawned by the world what time her spring was warm,
This man, that crawled on earth's primeval sod,
Learned not himself, but seeking outward saw
Transfigured self on circumambient air ;
Whence seized by fatal impulse and strange awe,
Worshipping what he knew not, he enslaved
Æons of men who blindly wept and raved
To filmy phantoms of their own despair.

IV.

Moloch whose frown with furnace flame is dim,
Starlike Astarte and crowned Ashtaroth,
With her who rising from the bitter froth
Of ocean waves loosened each languid limb;
Jehovah, lord of holiness, whose wrath
Scatters like clouds the shuddering Seraphim,
And He, the Crucified, who bound to him
The bleeding nations with a brother's oath;
All these, and all besides whom all men fear,
Are thĕ phantasmal shadowy shows of man,
Flesh of our flesh, soul of our soul, made clear
And magnified for feeble eyes to scan;
Our gods ourselves are, glorious or base,
As the dream varies with the varying race.

V.

What then was He, the Sun, who flashed his ray
On that thin veil of momentary mist,
Who summoned from the darkness and dismissed
The spectre of myself at break of day?
Was he not Lord perchance? The phantom grey,
Glimmering with purple and pale amethyst,
He played with, as kings play with whom they list,
Then did but smile, and made it melt away.
Thus, howsoe'er our dreams and visions range,
Dwells there not One secure, who still abides,
Creating all, surveying chance and change,
Whose ray the darkness and the cloud divides?
Him yet we see not, but shall surely see
When in His time he bids the shadows flee.

VI.

If this indeed be truth, how long shall man,
Involved in dreams, deluded by vain hope,
Fulfil the past's forgotten horoscope,
Nor raise his head to heaven's meridian?
Alas! nay, let him raise it: let him scan
The temples of the sky from base to cope:
What finds he there? The azure arches slope
Upward as when creation's day began:
Pure light, pure ether, fine, impalpable:
No form appears; no thunder from the void
Startles the stillness with plain oracle;
The powers of earth and heaven are still employed
In weaving their thin veil invisible,
Nor have the growing years the veil destroyed.

VII.

Part of the whole that never can be known,
Is this poor atom that we call our world;
Part of this part amid confusion hurled
Is man, an idiot on a crumbling throne:
Yea, and each separate soul that works alone,
Striving to pierce the clouds around him curled,
Gasps but one moment in the tempest whirled,
And what he builds strong Death hath overthrown.
How shall this fragment of a waif, this scape
In the oblivion of unreckoned years,
This momentary guest of time, this ape
That grins and chatters amid smiles and tears,—
How shall he seize the skirts of God and shape
To solid form the truth that disappears?

VIII.

Let man with man, let race with race, let age
With age æonian linked in serried line,
Scale the celestial station crystalline
And with high God continual battle wage :
Nay, let them pace in patient pilgrimage
Toward that unknown mysterious hidden shrine
Where dwells the very truth and life divine,
If haply they may greet and kiss their liege.
O whither, whither shall their steps be led ?
Upward or downward, on what paths of thought ?—
Have ye not seen the clouds that morning bred,
Storming Olympus with fierce thunder fraught ?
Ere noon they went their way, and overhead
The same clear web of limpid light was wrought.

THE ALPS AND ITALY.

I.

I HAD two loves : now both are lost to me !
  One was a maiden, pure as mounded snow,
  Bright as those scentless summer flowers that blow
  On Alpine summits, uncontrollably free
As winds that sweep the frozen glacier sea :
  The other was a witch, whose dark eyes glow
  Like mirrored stars asleep on Lario,
  Whose voice is even the voice of Italy.
Now both are lost, which was the best beloved—
  She whose clear smile of daylight drew me up
  O'er snow and scaur to greet the ascendant sun ;
Or she whose mouth mixed passion like a cup,
  Wherefrom I drank such rapture unreproved
  As Dian showered on young Endymion ?

II.

O solemn hours of high-souled solitude,
Health and composure of the passionless mind !
On those calm heights no earth-born vapours blind
The spirit in her heaven-aspiring mood.
Love, my first love, who wert so true and good,
Why did I ever fly from thee to find
The bloom that withers and the joys that bind
Mid Circe's sloth-imbruted multitude ?
Wearied, heart-broken, worn, and withering,
How can I lift me to thy luminous eyes ?
My wasted life is but a worthless thing.
Above me spread the light-irradiate skies,
While caged and cribbed the soul within me dies,
Nor can the slow years heal her shattered wing.

III.

Thou second love, have I no hymn for thee,
No holocaust to render at thy shrine,
Where lap the waveless waters hyaline
Of Venice shielded from the rough rude sea ?
Lo, thou hast had all thy wild will of me ;
And I am but thy bond-slave ; I am thine,
Mad wondrous love of May-nights and the shine
Of quivering lamps and wave-borne minstrelsy !
No need to sing thy praises, or to pray
To thee, who hovering o'er my dreaming head,
Drainest my life-blood nightly, day by day
Pursuest me with visions, and dost spread
Snares for my failing feet ! Though thou art dead,
Thy phantom lures me still to sure decay.

IV.

Nay, Loves, of one high lineage undefiled,
As ye are strong and dreadful, and must be
Lords of my life for all eternity,
So be ye also merciful and mild.
To you I gave myself while yet a child :
I cried, 'For beauty, lo, I live ; for me
There shall be nought in earth or air or sea,
That shall not fill my heart with rapture wild.'
Slay not your servant ! See me stabbed and stung
With arrows of intolerable ire !
Shafts from your splendours on my spirit flung,
Have parched my heart's blood with intensest fire :
I vowed to live for your divinity ;
Like lightning-smitten Semele, I die.

V.

Fair sights and sounds assail me. I am torn
By the quick pulses of the passionate sky,
Throbbing with light of stars, or stormfully
Piling pearled thunder-clouds athwart the morn.
The strange sweet glance, the smile of passers borne
From hearts that know me not through lip and eye,
Thrill me with fruitless longing—I would die
To feel their life and be less love-forlorn.
The world is thus a quiver stored with sharp
Fledged shafts of inexpressible pleasure-pain,
Searching the marrow of the wakeful brain ;
While memory, like a tense Æolian harp,
Sensitive to the breath of dreams that sweep
Its tingling chords, torments the soul in sleep.

VI.

Gustans gustavi mellis paullulum,
Et ecce morior !—A little honey
I tasted, pure as palest agrimony,
And lo, the death-pangs on my soul are come !—
Was this my sin ? Amid the tangled trees
Where He hath set our going, drops the comb
From many a pendent bough, the wild bee's home
May we not take thereof a little ease ?
God hangs that harmless venom in our sight ;
But man's vow makes it mortal, or man's will
Bent upon lawlessness and lewd delight.
Could we but extirpate each thought of ill,
Could we but strip our soul of self, we might
Aye taste God's honey on His holy hill.

VII.

'Tis self whereby we suffer : 'tis the greed
To grasp, the hunger to assimilate
All that earth holds of fair and delicate,
The lust to blend with beauteous lives, to feed
And take our fill of loveliness, which breed
This anguish of the soul intemperate :
'Tis self that turns to pain and poisonous hate
The calm clear life of love the angels lead.
Oh, that 'twere possible this self to burn
In the pure flames of joy contemplative !
Then might we love all loveliness, nor yearn
With tyrannous longings ; undisturbed might live,
Greeting the summer's and the spring's return,
Nor wailing that their bloom is fugitive !

VIII.

Too far I wander from my chosen theme.
Once more, ye mountains, and ye lands, once more,
With oleanders crowned and olives hoar,
To you returns the spirit of my dream.
Upon this Sabbath morning all things seem
Hallowed to calm. Thus oftentimes before
The seventh day brought a truce to pain, and bore
My shallop through still waters down life's stream.
Nearer to God, in this sedater mood,
I can surmount those rival loves, and see
Both beauties blent in His beatitude.
My earth-bound soul now for one hour is free ;
And soaring upward from this altitude,
The Love of Loves Himself enlightens me.

AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.

FROM HEINE.

There is a fir stands lonely
In the North on a bald hill-brow :
It sleeps, and with folds of whiteness
Envelop it ice and snow.

It sleeps and dreams of a palm-tree,
Far off in the Morning-land,
Lonely and silent pining
On a cliff o'er the shimmering sand.

THE LOVE OF THE ALPS.

There was a time, ye mountains and ye streams,
Ere yet I knew the might of your control ;
But now, where'er I go, your presence seems
To fill the inmost chamber of my soul,
Restraining me in hours of sloth from wrong
And prompting nobler thoughts when I am strong.

Long time I listened patient at your knee
To hear the melody which would not flow
From cloud and crag and breathing wind and tree
And silver summits of untainted snow ;
Yet still I waited, bowed in bitter shame,
And on my thankless spirit laid the blame.

It was a dark and drear novitiate :
I saw, but could not feel your awful calm :
I lay abandoned at your palace gate :
Fainting I wrestled for the glorious palm :
And knew that he who strives must surely win,
That he who knocks and waits will enter in.

Many there passed me glad and light of heart
With counterfeited hymns of hollow praise,
Who bade me in their service take a part—
I scorned their empty words and erring ways,
And rather chose to lie outside your shrine
Than be the High Priest of the half divine.

You saw and heard me ; not one weary hour
Of all that waiting time was spent in vain ;
For since I felt your strong prophetic power
Beat in the fiery pulse of heart and brain,
You have not left your servant day or night,
But are his ceaseless source of comfort and delight.

There was no blinding vision, no loud cry
Of thundrous adjuration, when my soul

Felt that the consecrating grace was nigh,
And heard the heavenly gates asunder roll,
And saw the hallowed mysteries, and trod
The sounding chambers of the house of God.

Sunsetting and sunrising, silent stars
In dim procession through the untroubled sky,
Still winds that came and went, and noisy jars
Of whirlwinds battling with the clouds on high,
The solitary voices of the floods,
Flowers, and deep places of primeval woods;

These wrought the change; for these from childhood's dawn
Had nurtured me; through these, as through the rites
Of due initiation I was drawn
Into communion with those sacred heights
On which God's glory broodeth as a cloud,
Which with the voice of very God are loud.

THE CROCUS AND THE SOLDANELLA.

WHEREVER on the untrodden Alps
The snows begin to fade,
And frozen streams to leap again
Beneath the pine-tree shade;

While still the grass is brown and dead
With its long winter sleep,
And leafless shrubs their withered arms
Stretch down the barren steep ;
Then here and there two little flowers,
Like lights of earliest morn,
Or rays of hope in sorrow seen,
Shine on the slopes forlorn.
They break the snow with gentle force
And struggle toward the sun :
The chilly wreaths around them melt,
The streams beneath them run.
The dull old earth feels young again,
So fresh and bright they peer,
Pale pearly cups and lilac bells,
Crying 'The spring is here.'
But when the snows have died and flown
Like spirits to the sky,
In shape of fleecy summer clouds
That on the mountains lie ;
When on the cool green fields the grass
Grows deeper day by day ;
And all the troops of laughing flowers
Make rock and meadow gay ;
Then you may look in vain to find
These first frail buds of spring :
The month that quickens all to life
Hath watched their withering.
They broke the frozen winter snow,
And spake the first good morrow ;

They bade us be of better cheer
When we were dulled with sorrow.
Now they must die and droop away :
Their very graves ignore them ;
Fresh leaves and gaudy blossoms wave
Above the slopes that bore them.
Only where here and there the snows
Of avalanches linger,
And Winter on a gloomy dell
Lays his cold lifeless finger ;
There still secluded from the wealth
Of happier fields they blow,
Blooming and fading hour by hour
Near the retreating snow.
They bloom and fade, and do not shrink
From their appointed duty ;
To show the path that June must tread
But not to share her beauty ;
To live their short lives on the brink
Of death, and then to perish,
Between the chill snow and the sun
That burns but does not cherish.
Die, little flowers, but not unwept
Nor yet unhonoured die :
Like you dawn's herald star doth fade
From the dim morning sky;
Like you the great and good and wise,
The first of those who woke

From sleeps of ignorance and through
The snows of ages broke,
Sank, having done their work, nor saw
The summer they foretold—
Glad flowers and grasses o'er them wave,
Blue, crimson, green, and gold.

ON THE ALP.

We met, but nought from thee I prayed,
Thou solitary mountain maid :
How could I tame
Unto my melancholy mood,
The rhythms of thy bounding blood,
Thy soul of flame ?

I did but see thee and pass by,
Gazing with half-averted eye
Lest Love should leap
Upon my heart like winds that dash
The rock-entwining mountain ash
Adown the steep.

Yet as I looked and saw thee stand
Twixt sun and shade with lifted hand
And bright eyes blue,

With curving lips half opened free,
And hair that curled tempestuously,
And heightened hue ;

Receiving full on furtive eyes
The magic of thy soft surprise,
The subtle spell
Of some sweet trouble in thy mind
Scarce felt like tremblings undefined
On a clear well ;

Into my soul of souls a god
With wild fire flew, and flaming trod
Her secret shrine ;
So that I stood astonied then,
And now beneath the eyes of men
In silence pine.

BEFORE SUNRISE.

A FULL moon sinking in the west ; a beam
Of morn uprising from the orient skies :
Dim meadow-ways beneath, where the dew lies
And flowers of autumn crocus faintly gleam.
Through the hushed pines, beside the hurrying stream,
We downward fare, while bells of dawning rise
From unseen hamlets, and before our eyes
The solid world looms like a twilight dream.

High up in heaven above the unfading snow,
Laved by strong ocean floods of confluent light,
A sole star shines ; within its restless spark
Ruby and sapphire mingle, shoot, and glow—
Thus, Petrarch, didst thou burn, intensely bright,
Betwixt the day-spring and the dolorous dark

THE CAPPUZIN.

A SPHINX-LIKE face, wrapped with eternal snow,
Frost-bound in petrefaction, stark and dread,
With sneers on the blurred lips and eyeballs dead,
And menace on the brows that lie so low ;
A Niobe whose tears have ceased to flow,
Ridged into icy wrinkles ; vanquishèd
Prometheus, who no longer lifts his head
To give Jove's vulture blow for bloody blow ;
The image of a spent faith, mocking man
With vain similitude of human form,
Obsolete, outworn, ugly, ossified,
Clogged with dull mist and elemental storm
Whereof the ancient harmonies have died
Down to blank murmurs, doubts æonian.

ON THE SCHWARZHORN.

In the divine September weather
We clomb yon sable horn, as free
As any floating wind-stirred feather
Of cloud in heaven's immensity.

The heavens above us slept, and golden
Were all the lights of earliest day :
Not one sharp peak was unbeholden
Of all the heights that round us lay.

East called to West with giant voices,
And North to South gave back the song ;
With pride as when a god rejoices,
The Ortler shouted to Mont Blanc.

Bernina's serried ice-tops glistened
In glory of the ascendant morn ;
And far away those brethren listened
Around the towering Aletschhorn.

From pain and care and fear delivered
We drank the sun-illumined view :
The little winds that round us shivered,
Brought winged hopes and rapture new.

Then from that high up-lifted eyrie
We hailed Pitz Languard, and the span
Of all those years, so sweet, so weary,
Was bridged, and better life began :

For past and present flew together ;
Father and mother, side by side,
In the divine September weather
Saw in their child love justified.

AN AUTUMN DAY.

A soul is in the sunlight. Not one breath
Troubles the stainless and translucent sky.
Methinks the spirits of the mountains fly
Heaven-ward like flames. Blue air encompasseth
The congregated Alps that lift on high
Their crownèd brows, to hear what Summer saith.
She, having whispered, will depart ; and death
Comes in the clasp of Winter by and by.
Hushed are the pines. There is no stir, no strife,
No fretful wailing of frore winds that blow
Earth's winding-sheet of cold uncoloured snow.
This morn, upon the brink of dying, Life
Draws a deep draught of peace, and rapture thrills
Through all the pulses of the impassioned hills.

NOVEMBER.

Frost comes ; and the summer is finished ;
The world lies vacant and still,
To dream through the winter with minished
Dull life in the desolate chill.

Thus we, when the sense of enjoyment
Hath passed from our blood and our brain,
Are left without light or employment
In passionless pain.

AFTER SUNSET.

My heart is far away :
Love holds it in his hand
On that enchanted strand,
With hope and youth to-day.

My prison house of snow
Is still and cold as death :
There comes not any breath
From love that laughs below.

Into the skies I gaze
At sundown for the star
Who looks on love afar
Beneath those roseate rays.

Will my heart's message come?
Speak, star, or I shall die!—
Hesper hath set, dark night is nigh,
Love sleeps, my heart is dumb.

AN INVITATION TO THE SLEDGE.

COME forth, for dawn is breaking;
The sun hath touched the snow:
Our blithe sledge-bells are calling,
And Christian waits below.

All day o'er snow-drifts gliding
'Twixt grey-green walls of ice,
We'll chase the winter sunlight
Adown the precipice.

Above black swirling death-waves
We will not shrink nor blanch,
Though the bridge that spans the torrent
Be built by an avalanche.

We'll talk of love and friendship
And hero-hearted men,
Mid the stems of spangled larches
In the fairy-frosted glen.

With flight as swift as swallows
We'll sweep the curdled lake,
Where the groans of prisoned kelpies
Make the firm ice-pavement quake.

We'll thread the sombre forest,
Where giant pines are crowned
With snow-caps on their branches
Bent to the snowy ground.

Strong wine of exultation,
Free thoughts that laugh at death,
Shall warm our wingèd spirits
Though the shrill air freeze our breath.

With many a waif of music
And memory-wafted song,
With the melody of faces
Loved when the world was young,

With clear Hellenic stories
And names of old romance,
We'll wake our soul's deep echoes
While the hills around us dance :

Dance to the arrowy motion
Of our sledge so firm and free,
Skimming the beaten snow-track
As a good ship skims the sea.

Like love, like all that's joyous,
Like youth, like life's delight,
This day is dawning o'er us
Between a night and a night.

O friend, 'tis ours to clasp it !
Come forth ! No better bliss
For hearts by hope uplifted
Hath heaven or earth than this !

A BALLATA.

'I MET my love among the low
Lake-gardens of Menaggio.'

O shepherd, drive thy flocks a-field,
Thy hungry flocks, that feed alway
Upon the flowers of thoughts that yield
Sweet pasture to the soul in May !
Yet, ere thou leave me, shepherd, say
Where Love's immortal lilies grow !

'I met my love among the low
Lake-gardens of Menaggio.'

Is there a home for errant Love,
Whose wings are weary with the chase
Of airy dreams that float above

The clasp of flying Love's embrace?
Know'st thou some cool and tranquil place
Where poppies and nepenthé blow?

'I met my love among the low
Lake-gardens of Menaggio.'

Say, shepherd, hast thou seen the god
Who in his arms bears wounded Love?
Have thine enchanted footsteps trod
Elysium's sleepy myrtle-grove,
Where rest remains for souls that strove,
And waters of oblivion flow?

'I met my love among the low
Lake-gardens of Menaggio.'

O shepherd, hast thou nought but this
Wherewith to soothe a heart that yearns?
So may thy fair flocks never miss
Meet pasturage mid flowers and ferns,
As thou shalt tell me whither turns
Love wildered on the homeless snow!

'I met my love among the low
Lake-gardens of Menaggio.'

IN FEBRUARY.

THE birds have been singing to-day
And saying: 'The spring is near!
The sun is as warm as in May,
And the deep blue heavens are clear.'

The little bird on the boughs
Of the sombre snow-laden pine
Thinks: 'Where shall I build me my house,
And how shall I make it fine?

'For the season of snow is past:
The mild south wind is on high;
And the scent of the spring is cast
From his wing as he hurries by.'

The little birds twitter and cheep
To their loves on the leafless larch:
But seven foot deep the snow-wreaths sleep,
And the year hath not worn to March.

WAITING.

THE sunbeams slant along the snow;
  It is a day of days:
O magic of those lands below,
  How long the spring delays!
Hast thou detained her on the shore
Where bloom Love's lilies ever more?

FRAGMENT OF A LETTER.

I PAUSE, and break this sombre strain.—
Do you remember how the rain
Hissed in the beech-boughs, when one night
We sat and talked in evening light
Here in the music-room, and you
Played Bach's first prelude not quite through?
And how the weird discordant cry
Of that old Erard made me sigh,
Thinking what wealth of memories
Lay locked and frozen in its keys?
Here am I sitting now: the rain
Beats on the rattling window-pane;
And yet I dare not thus alone
Evoke that melancholy tone,
I cannot strike one chord lest I
Should have to wail in sympathy:
For am I not like it forlorn,
With strings of sweetest tone outworn,
Thrust out of sight in Alpine cold,
Ere half my melodies are told?

PROMETHEUS DEAD.

On a night of mid December,
In this land of frost and snow,
Came a dream which I remember
After years of joy and woe,
For the vision bore the burden
Of a hundred voices heard on
Shores of life where hope is low.

Mid Caucasian crags I wandered,
Peaks up-piled above the sea,
And my soul was dark and pondered
Cheerless on a doom to be,
Which I could nor mark nor measure,
Though its cold incumbent pressure
Like a mountain weighed on me.

'Twas the moment when the mellow
Lights of earliest dawn are felt,
Long before the east is yellow
Or the shades begin to melt,
But some tremor gives a warning
To the shuddering stars that morning
Stirs beneath dim Ocean's belt.

To those gaunt grey cliffs, fantastic
Torrents clung of flawless ice,

Carved and moulded by the plastic
Hand of frost with quaint device ;
Fret, frieze, pinnacle, pilaster,
Sharp and clear as alabaster,
Sculptured on the precipice.

Here the storm and stress of winter,
Here the smiting shafts of morn,
Strewed the stones with spilth and splinter
From the fairy fabric torn ;
But though changing, lasting never,
Still new shapes were rising ever,
From the frozen fountains born.

Through the twilight stern and solemn,
Long, how long, I groped my way,
Twixt sheer crag and azure column,
Where the glassy ruin lay ;
Till at length there flew a message
From the sea, with rosy presage
Heralding the birth of day.

Then at that first blissful minute,
While my heart leaped up to face
Dawning with the world's life in it,
And the sun-god's dear embrace,
Led by dreams I found a chasm
Where the earth-throe's primal spasm
Clove the hills from cope to base.

Slept old ocean's myriad fountains
Like a glittering snake encurled
Round the girdle of the mountains,
On the limits of the world ;
But above, in new-born glory,
Rose a glacier smooth and hoary,
Where the wildest rocks were hurled.

From abrupt and monstrous ledges
Hung the flood upheld by frost ;
Pierced with adamantine wedges
Five times mid the tempest-tossed
Wreck of old-world ice that weltered
On the scaur no forest sheltered,
And no foot hath ever crossed.

Waved like water, like a mirror
Crystal-clear without one flaw,
Quickening the soul to terror
With a vague mysterious awe,
Flowed that fount of tears eternal
Freed and fixed by the diurnal
Interchange of frost and thaw.

Underneath yon glassy ocean
Which the five-fold nails transfix,
Looms a god's form without motion
Strained as on a crucifix;

From his chin the beard is streaming,
Over breast and shoulder gleaming ;
Grey grey hairs and glacier mix.

And the sculptured limbs Titanic,
'Neath that ribbed transparent veil,
Elemental yet organic,
Quiver not, nor flinch, nor quail ;
Though 'twixt crag and ice in anguish
They are doomed for aye to languish,
Though those tears shall never fail.

Ah Prometheus ! Friend and master !
Dost thou still endure for us
Thy perpetual disaster
On the cliffs of Caucasus ?
Shall new creeds and new gods waken
Hope for men, while thou forsaken
Still must weep and suffer thus ?

Shall thy fount of tears, still flowing,
Freezing still, for ever run,
Waning, waxing, wasting, growing,
Prisoning thee from stars and sun ?
Kinder surely were Jove's vulture
Than this death-in-life sepulture,
Pitied, scorned, and shared by none !

Thus I cried ; but day new-risen
Pierced the ice, and I could see
That encased in that cold prison
Lay a mummied mystery ;
For the old faiths die and dwindle
With each twirl of Clotho's spindle,
And she spins eternally.

Yea, our faiths fade ; and the older
Gods who groaned and bled for men,
Turn to stone and ice ; they moulder
Far withdrawn from mortal ken :
And in dreams and visions lonely
We revoke their phantoms only,
Nor bring back our dead again.

IN ITALY.

AT AMALFI.

HERE might I rest for ever; here,
Till death, inviolate of fear,
  Descended cloud-like on calm eyes,
Enjoy the whisper of the waves
Stealing around those azure caves,
  The gloom and glory of the skies!

Great mother, Nature, on thy breast
Let me, unsoiled by sorrow, rest,
  By sin unstirred, by love made free:
Full-tried am I by years that bring
The blossoms of the tardy spring
  Of wisdom, thine adept to be.

In vain I pray: the wish expires
Upon my lip, as fade the fires
  Of youth in withered veins and weak;
Not mine to dwell, the neophyte
Of Nature, in her shrine of light,
  But still to strive and still to seek.

I have outgrown the primal mirth
That throbs in air and sea and earth ;
  The world of worn humanity
Reclaims my care ; at ease to range
Those hills, and watch their interchange
  Of light and gloom, is not for me.

Dread Pan, to thee I turn : thy soul
That through the living world doth roll,
  Stirs in our heart an aching sense
Of beauty, too divinely wrought
To be the food of mortal thought,
  For earth-born hunger too intense.

Breathless we sink before thy shrine ;
We pour our spirits forth like wine ;
  With trembling hands we strive to lift
The veil of airy amethyst,
That shrouds thy godhood like a mist ;
  Then, dying, forth to darkness drift.

Thy life around us laughs, and we
Are merged in its immensity ;
  Thy chanted melodies we hear,
The marrying chords that meet and kiss
Between two silences ; but miss
  The meaning, though it seems so clear.

From suns that sink o'er silent seas,
From myrtles neath the mountain breeze
  Shedding their drift of scented snow,

From fleeting hues, from sounds that swoon
On pathless hills, from night and noon,
  The inarticulate passions flow,

That are thy minions, mighty Pan !
No priest hast thou ; no muse or man
  Hath ever told, shall ever tell,
But each within his heart alone,
Awe-struck and dumb hath learned to own,
  The burden of thine oracle.

LOOKING BACK.

(AT SORRENTO, MARCH 1864.)

WHY murmur, why look back, my soul ?
Six long years like an ocean roll
  Between thy youth and thee.
Thou hast the present ; keep that fast :
Trust not the future ; drown the past :
  What thou art, learn to be.

Deep orange groves by Naples' shore,
Warm slopes with laughing olives hoar,
  The myrtle by the bay :
Bright flowers that in the thickets blow,
Soft airs that melt the mountain snow,
  Showers weeping silver spray :

All these thou hast ; and dost thou sigh
For Clifton's oft beclouded sky,
Her woods and barren down ;
The tawny strait, the narrow stream,
The cliff where thou wast wont to dream
The tumult of the town ;

The old Cathedral, quaint and grey,
Where stately service, day by day,
From choir and organ pealed ;
The little face, loved long ago,
The thrilling treble, faint and low,
The pain its music healed ?

The memory of that sacred spring
Still stirs my soul to sorrowing ;
She cannot choose but sigh.
I dwelt as in a magic isle
With fairy fancies to beguile
My life's monotony.

Love was the wand I swayed at will :
Not Ischia's slope nor Capri's hill
Have joys so fair and free,
As in that brief enchanted spring
From every humble household thing
I fashioned for my glee.

Too soon it fled ; and year by year
Came slowly trooping care and fear
Spent powers and clouded faith :

A sorrow to my spirit clung—
A pang, not mine, whose poison stung
The soul it could not scathe.

Nor health nor hope remained ; I fled
From land to land ; my weary head
In strangers' homes I laid :
And now, by fair Sorrento's bay,
I sit and sigh this sweet spring day,
Beneath the olive shade.

The birds may murmur as they will,
The kids may leap upon the hill,
The wavelets on their sand :
But I must bear an even heart,
Proof against pain or passion's smart ;
Unstirred, unshaken, stand.

Once more I will begin to live ;
The future much may have to give ;
Her face I cannot see ;
But feel as though the past had been
Played out unto its utmost scene,
The stage swept clear and free.

Bid memory with each rolling year
Fold fainter wings, and disappear ;
Then wrap thy soul in strength :
There's rest beneath the weltering wave ;
There's rest in heaven though storms may rave ;
Thou too shalt rest at length.

LINES WRITTEN ON THE ROOF OF MILAN CATHEDRAL.

'A mount of marble, a hundred spires.

THE long, long night of utter loneliness,
Of conflict, pain, defeat, and sore distress,
Hath vanished ; and I stand as one whose life
Wages with death a scarcely winning strife,
Here on this mount of marble. Like a sea
Waveless and blue, the sky's transparency
Bathes spire and statue. Was it man or God
Who built these domes, whereon the feet have trod
Of eve and night and morn with rose and gold
And silver and strange symbols manifold
Of shadow? Fabric not of stone but mist
Or pearl or cloud beneath heaven's amethyst
Glitters the marvel : cloud congealed to shine
Through centuries with lustre crystalline ;
Pearl spiked and fretted like an Orient shell ;
Mist on the frozen fern-wreaths of a well.
Not God's but man's work this : God's yonder fane,
Reared on the distant limit of the plain,
From azure into azure, to blue sky
Shooting from vapours blue that folded lie

Round valley-basements, robed in royal snow,
Wherefrom life-giving waters leaping flow,
Aerial Monte Rosa !—God and man
Confront each other, with this narrow span
Of plain to part them, try what each can do
To make applauding Seraphs from the blue
Lean marvel-smitten, or alight with song
Upon the glittering peaks, or clustering throng
The spacious pathways. God on man's work here
Hath set His signature and symbol clear ;
Man's soul that thinks and feels, to God's work there
Gives life, which else were cold and dumb and bare.
God is man's soul ; man's soul a spark of God :
By God in man the dull terrestrial clod
Becomes a thing of beauty ; thinking man
Through God made manifest, outrival can
His handiwork of nature. Do we dream
Mingling reality with things that seem ?
Or is it true that God and man appear
One soul in sentient art self-conscious here,
One soul o'er senseless nature stair by stair
Raised to create by comprehending there ?

IN VENICE.

I.

THE INVITATION TO THE GONDOLA.

Come forth ; for Night is falling,
The moon hangs round and red
On the verge of the violet waters,
Fronting the daylight dead.

Come forth ; the liquid spaces
Of sea and sky are as one,
Where outspread angel flame-wings
Brood o'er the buried sun.

Bells call to bells from the islands,
And far-off mountains rear
Their shadowy crests in the crystal
Of cloudless atmosphere.

A breeze from the sea is wafted ;
Lamp-litten Venice gleams
With her towers and domes uplifted
Like a city seen in dreams.

Her water-ways are atremble
With melody far and wide,

Borne from the phantom galleys
That o'er the darkness glide.

There are stars in heaven, and starry
Are the wandering lights below :
Come forth! for the Night is calling,
Sea, city, and sky are aglow !

II.

THE PONTE DI PARADISO.

PRELUDE.

Of all the mysteries wherethrough we move,
This is the most mysterious—that a face,
Seen peradventure in some distant place,
Whither we can return no more to prove
The world-old sanctities of human love,
Shall haunt our waking thoughts, and gathering grace
Incorporate itself with every phase
Whereby the soul aspires to God above.
Thus are we wedded through that face to her
Or him who bears it ; nay, one fleeting glance,
Fraught with a tale too deep for utterance,
Even as a pebble cast into the sea,
Will on the deep waves of our spirit stir
Ripples that run through all eternity.

THEME.

This is the bridge of Paradise :
'Twas here he lay,
Gazing with large and earnest eyes
That summer day.

Twelve years since then have flown, and yet
I seem to see
From yon smooth marble parapet
Him smile at me.

Once more, a living god, he stands,
Flings back his hair ;
Lifts his strong arms, and spreads his hands
To the warm air.

I know not what electric thrill,
'Twixt me and him,
Shot with a sudden ache that still
Makes daylight dim.

Only those dark and steadfast eyes,
Where the soul shone,
When I awake in Paradise
Will greet my own.

EPILOGUE.

Soul cries to soul, as star to sundered star
  Calls through the void of intermediate night ;
  And as each tiniest spark of stellar light
  Includes a world where moving myriads are,
Thus every glance seen once and felt afar
  Symbols an universe : the spirit's might
  Leaps through the gazing eyes, with infinite
  Pulsations that no lapse of years can mar.
He therefore dwells within me still ; and I
  Within him dwell ; though neither clasp of hand
  Nor interchange of converse made us one :
And it shall surely be that when we die,
  In God shall both see clear and understand
  What soul to soul spake, sun to brother sun.

III.

IN THE SMALL CANALS.

Love, felt from far, long sought, scarce found,
    On thee I call ;
Here where with silvery silent sound
    The smooth oars fall ;

Here where the glimmering water-ways,
Above yon stair,
Mirror one trembling lamp that plays
In twilight air !

What sights, what sounds, O poignant Love
Ere thou wert flown,
Quivered these darksome waves above,
In darkness known !

I dare not dream thereof ; the sting
Of those dead eyes
Is too acute and close a thing
For one who dies.

Only I feel through glare and gloom,
Where yon lamp falls,
Dim spectres hurrying to their doom,
And Love's voice calls :

'Twas better thus toward death to glide,
Soul-full of bliss,
Than with long life unsatisfied
Life's crown to miss.

VINTAGE.

I FOUND him lying neath the vines that ran
  Grape-laden o'er grey frames of oak and beech ;
A fair and jocund Faun, whose beard began,
  Like dewy down on quince or blushing peach,
  To soften chin and cheek. He bade me reach
My hand to his, and drew me through the screen
Of clusters intertwined with glistening green.

Sunrise athwart us fell—a living fire,
  That touching turned our tendrilled roof to red ;
Network of shade from many a flickering spire
  And solid orb upon the youth was shed ;
  With purple grapes and white his comely head
Was crowned, and in his hand a bunch he pressed
Against the golden glory of his breast.

Gourds with the grapes, and hops, and serpentine
  Wreaths of blue bindweed tangling built a bower,
Where lying we could watch 'twixt vine and vine
  Young men and maidens move, and singing shower
  On wattled crates the fruit whose hoary flower
With dew still glistened ; for the kiss of night
Lay yet on vale and mountain misty-bright.

Some trod the press; some climbed the elms that hung
  Vine-burdened ; and beneath, a beardless boy
Tuning his melancholy lute-strings sung

A wild shrill song, that spake of only joy,
But was so sad that virgins cold and coy
Melted, and love mid sorrow-sweetness fell
On careless hearts that felt the powerful spell.

THE MYRTLE BOUGH.

On this low shore where Lerici
Still dreams of her dead Cyprian queen,
A myrtle rod I break for thee,
White flowers and dark leaves ever green.

I know not whether Love or Death
Be symbolled by the branch I raise ;
Both Love and Death could claim a wreath
Of myrtle in those ancient days.

Take then the leaves and let them crown
In some still hour his brows and thine ;
But lay the moon-white blossoms down,
A sacrifice to Proserpine.

So shalt thou pledge, thy friend and thou,
That old Eumenidean troth,
Of love through life the binding vow
Sworn unto death who waits for both.

HENDECASYLLABLES.

O THE beautiful eyes of contadini !
O the ring of their voices on the hill-sides !
O their gravity, grace of antique movement—
Driving furrows athwart the autumnal cornland,
Poised like statues above the laden axles
Drawn by tardy majestic oxen homewards !
What large melody fills you, ye divine youths,
Meet companions of old Homeric heroes ?
Ah, to vanish in mist upon your foreheads,
Melt in airiest films of vapour round you,
Dwell unseen unattended at your hearth-stone,
If I whelmed in the mist and murk of illness,
If I clogged with the pains and pangs of ages,
Worn and torn into shreds by hopes that wither,
Could but gain for a guerdon and recapture
Rhythms felt by the soul in antenatal
Hours æonian orbed with ancient music !
These I, gazing on you, have half remembered ;
These you, thoughtless and all untuned to rapture,
Bear in beautiful eyes, ye contadini,
Waft in snatches of songs upon the hill-sides,
Breathe through stateliest limbs, ye moving statues !

FAREWELL TO TUSCANY.

We pass ; but they remain.
What though our feet upon this mountain stair
Be upward, backward bent
Beneath the cold unpitying firmament,
With stress and strain ;
Yet all that was so passing fair,
We leave behind us in the warm transparent air.

We carry memories too :
Sad phantoms of the days we reckoned dear ;
Strong tyrannous desires,
With hands that cling and eyes whose tears are fires :
The wine is new
Still on our lips of autumn here,
Which we too soon shall change for Alpine winter drear.

Florence lies far behind ;
Her grave grey palace-fronts, her lily towers ;
The curves of Arno bright
With star-set lamps that tremble in the night ;
Her wild west wind,
That shook those lightning-smitten showers
And flakes of sunbeams on the pale October flowers.

How far the dancing waves
Of Spezia, where the silvered olives sleep,

And flower-sprent myrtle sprays
Sweeten the sunny air by silent bays !
The calm sea laves
Those crags—but not for us—and deep
Dreams on the samphire cliffs and stairs of marble steep.

Ah me ! No more for us
Spreads the clear world-wide Tuscan land divine ;
Fold over billowy fold
Of fertile vale and tower-set mountain old,
Innumerous
As crowds of crested waves that shine
In sun and shadow on the spaceless ocean brine.

Soul-full we said Farewell !
What time those tears from flying storms were cast
O'er Thrasymene and thee,
Loveliest of hills whatever hills may be
Loved for the spell
Of names that in the memory last,
And with strange sweetness link our present to the past !

Mont' Amiata, thou
Shalt take the envoy of this sorrow-song !
For thou still gazest down
On Chiusi, and Siena's marble crown,
The bare hill-brow
Where gleams Cortona, and the strong
Light of the lands I love, the lands for which I long.

IN VAL BREGAGLIA.

'Tis the death of the year ; a fretful wind
Sways the willow wands to and fro ;
For the grey green olives are left behind,
And we climb to the land of frost and snow.

The leaves on the chestnut boughs are brown,
Dry with summer and drenched with rain,
And the walnut leaves come tumbling down
On the grass that cannot revive again.

The streams are swollen, livid of hue ;
Plague has smitten the speckled vines :
For the grapes are gathered, and mouldy blue
Covers the stake where the tendril twines.

It rains in gusts, and the stealthy snow
Soaks yon summit above the larch ;
The world was warmer with hope, I know,
When we crossed these gates of the Alps in March.

Here and there on the gaunt grey stones
Creepers, crimson with early cold,
Glare like tinsel among dead bones
Of kings that rot in their tombs of gold.

Onward and upward, stair by stair,
Toiling drowsily, slow but sure,
By the drizzling rocks in the dismal air,
We fix our face like a flint and endure.

Winter has six months where we dwell,
Snow-drifts cover us, wrap us round ;
To sleep and to slumber is very well,
But we long for sight and we pine for sound.

Dream then ! Life is nought but a dream !
Learn oblivion, and cease to think
Of the midnight lamps that flicker and gleam
By the bridges there on the Arno's brink.

IMELDA LAMBERTAZZI.

IMELDA LAMBERTAZZI.

Of the worst woe that on Bologna fell
Stirring the bitter seeds of hate and hell,
This was the cause. The Lambertazzi fed
Fierce feud with that great house whose mighty head
Was Giano Gieremei ; square and street
Clanked with their horses' hooves and mailèd feet,
And o'er the lowly city roofs there rose
Tower against tower, the haunt of jealous foes,
Who glared with hungry eyes from grates of steel,
And ground live curses from their iron heel ;
Nor, though each sought pretence and cause of fight,
For all their venomous hate and wordy spite,
Had the feud blossomed into public war,
But lingered yet upon the dubious bar
Of private strife; till Giano's only son,
Young Boniface, than whom no fairer one
Moved hearts of maidens in the month of May,
Beheld Imelda, daughter of the grey
Orlando Lambertazzi. How they met,
Or what deep spell in sundered bosoms set

Fair Love, I know not ; for my story saith
This only, that their Love was strong as Death,
Growing three winters with their growth till blight
Fell on the blossoms of their bridal night.

On May day in the Marches Amorous
Which lie outside Bologna, from her house
Built o'er the city wall, Imelda spied
Boniface arrayed in knightly splendour ride
Through the armed lists : upon his glittering crest
Sat valour plumed, the while with lance in rest
Atilt he ran ; and one man praised his steed,
And one his spear, and one his wondrous speed ;
Yea, and some spake of skill or strength of limb,—
Though, sooth to say, the strength that dwelt in him
Lay not in thews or sinews, and his skill
Was simple ; but his eyes had drunk their fill
Of grey eyes parted from him, and he moved
Within the airy sphere of her he loved ;
Whence he took wondrous puissance, and became
Less like a man that breathes, than like a flame
That pierceth where it listeth, and doth run
With fiercer might than aught beneath the sun.
So at the tourney's ending heralds cried :
'A Gieremei ; Boniface doth ride
Lord of the lists ! nor is there any might
Of man or steed to match with his in fight !'
The youth unclasped his visor from the chin,

Loosened the straps of steel to let light in,
And shook his curls free—sunny-warm and brown
Over his throat of mail they tumbled down ;
Then in the level sunlight gleaming red,
He raised the splendour of his princely head :
Love shone upon his cheek, Love in his eyes
Danced, as he reined his steed to take the prize
The May-queen reached him, bowed, and thundered on,
Through list and tent and gilt pavilion,
Unto Imelda's dwelling. There I ween
He stayed awhile, and on his brow serene
Might men have read this message : ' 'Tis for thee
I bear the guerdon of my victory ;
This scarf is thine, not hers who gave it me ! '
Yea, though they durst not speak, lest men should guess
The secret of their love, yet none the less
Heart sang to heart, and depth to depth within
Their sundered souls cried loud above the din
Of shouting crowds—as through the dissonant noise
Confused of mad waves shrills a human voice.
Then Boniface rode on, and well might men
Swear that he wore a glory round him then,
More like a saint than like a simple man—
Julian or Michael or Sebastian.

Story saith not how thenceforth hour by hour
Of Love the wild intoxicating flower

Budded and blossomed and grew ripe and shed
Its passionate petals upon youth and maid.
May nights, May mornings, lilied lawns that drank
Dews honey-fragrant, stars that rose and sank,
With moonlight and shrill birds among the showers
Of tremulous cream-white acacia flowers,
Whispers and stolen words and hurried sighs,
And kisses sweet as dreams of Paradise,
Ta'en by damned souls asleep who wake to see
Hell round them red with restless agony,—
These were the ways whereby at length they came
To dream of life as of a fitful flame,
Whereof the burning and the beam are fair
Though whirlwinds rave around in the dim air.
Wherefore of fear they took no heed, and grew
Hourly of aught that might their bliss undo
Less thoughtful ; but of all that might increase
The joy they had and plenitude of peace,
Desire more dear and longing more intense
Devoured their hearts with blissful vehemence.
So that in Love's audacity at length
They trusted blindly to the single strength
Of joy, that on the lover's shoulder lays
Wings like the wings of eagles, and doth raise
His heart aloft to venture and endure,
Mid swords and flames bearing a soul secure.
At last when many days and nights gone by
Had cradled fear in frail tranquillity,
And love grew sore between them, and desire

Withered their young souls with a breath of fire,
And each toward each yearned with strong thirst to be
Wedded in soul and flesh unchangeably,
Smiling they sware that not another day
Should dawn within the womb of flowery May,
Ere of love's well the deepest draught they drew,
And of love's lore the truest truth they knew.
Therefore at night, not long past twilight time,
Was Boniface the trellised wall to climb
Beneath Imelda's window, and—ah then,
Hidden away from envious eyes of men,
Having no thought of what might be, to take
The blossoms of the hours for sweet Love's sake.

He came : he clomb : the while upon her spray
Quivering the wild-voiced nightingale of May
Made music, nor stayed aught of her shrill cry,
For all that up the vine-boughs eagerly
Love-led he flew—so swift as swallow's flight
The feet that bore him to his heart's delight.
But one there was beneath, blear-eyed and grey,
Squatting within the cypress shade that lay
O'er lilies on the fair grass-plat below
Imelda's window :—cold as midnight snow,
With shrunken thews and withered eyes that strain
On death to rid them of their lifelong pain,
Hungry and hating all, this woman was ·

A hag from whom the glad folk, as they pass,
Turn with unreckoned loathing, while strange fear
Curdles their veins despite the blooming year.
She saw : and forasmuch no pain was worse
Than sight of joy that never might be hers,
And since she knew within that window gay
With flowers that blossom in the birth of May,
What rose of womanhood made misery seem
The idle shadow of an empty dream
To him who scaled so nimbly with such glee
The friendly vine-boughs of the balcony,—
How could she choose but rising with frore fire
In palsied limbs, the graves of dead desire,
Thank Hell who sent her thus midmost the curse
Of life that nothing knew twixt bad or worse,
Heart-sweet accomplishment of yearning hate
And recompense for waste years desolate?
Chuckling from shade to shade she softly stole,
And bent her ear beneath the vine-tree bole,
If haply from the window some love-word
Might mingle with the wild song of the bird.
A little laugh she heard, and 'Art thou here?
Oh overbold!' Nor more; for now the cheer
Those lovers made, needed not words, but bliss
Seemed blent and buried in a wilderness
Soul-full of kisses. Then the witch flung wide
Her shrivelled arms, and dropped no tears, but cried
A low short cry : whereat the nightingale
Stilled on his spray, and therewithal the pale

Face of the moon forth gliding looked upon
A writhen face with hate and anguish wan.—
Why tell of pain and envy and the rage
That trembles in the nerveless breast of age?
The path lay plain before her: forth she went,
Her weak feet steadied with a fixed intent,
And told her tale, and sowed the seed whereof
Sprang hell-fierce flowers of strength to stifle love.

It was a little room wherein the twain
Drank deep of bliss they ne'er should drink again.
Latticed with fretwork of frail tracery,
The upper casement dimmed the lucid sky
With violet, gules, and gold, and chrysopras,
Wherethrough pale stars in vain would peer and pass;
But all below was open wide, and white
Into the chamber streamed the free moonlight;
So that the arras-work, more faint and grey
With ghostly shapes than in the noon of day,
Showed Lancelot's love and Galahad and her
Who sold her soul for joy, Queen Guinever;
And in an angle of the wall there spread
Stainless with broidered blooms the maiden's bed.
Thereby those lovers communed, and all bliss
The world might yield seemed hollow matched with this.
'O Love!' she cried mid kisses, 'if to-night
Death touched my flower of life with his keen blight,

Thus would I choose to die, thus clasping thee
To pass into that cold uncertainty !
For this were peace ; nor would I dread at all
The ways unknown where icy shadows fall,
If I might take at least this touch of thee
And thy clasped palm, nor lose all memory
Of that sweet strength which from my soul hath banned
What fear soe'er across my path should stand.'
And laughing he : 'O love, my love, of Death
What sayst thou, sweetest ? Sure he tarrieth
Far off on shores forgotten ; nought I know
Of him or his, save that the short nights go
More softly when the velvet wings of sleep,
His brother, fold our souls in slumber deep.'
And she again : 'Thus heart to heart, and breast
In bliss eternal on broad bosom pressed,
And lip with lip, and voice with voice, and breath
With deep breath mingling, well may cast out Death;
For how can henceforth aught between us come,
Where in our close embrace no little room
Is left for thought to sunder us or be
A rift within our souls' felicity ?'
What said they who shall sing, or tell the tales,
Concordant with the love-lorn nightingale's,
They told each other of sure bliss afar
In lands which they would fly to, where the bar
Of hate ancestral like thin gossamer
Should fail from out their heavens and leave love clear ?
Long murmured they and whispered ; word by word

Was answered by the sleepless song that stirred
Within the thick acacia bowers, and faint
About their foreheads flew the flowery scent.

Meanwhile the brothers of Imelda, three
Stout knights with hearts as rough as the rude sea,
Listened within their hall to what the crone
Told them ; and much they thought and spake thereon,
Till in their souls the sword of hate was strong :
Yet waited they, thinking that sleep ere long
Would fall on Boniface within the bed
Of her, no more their sister. So night sped.

And now the moon was sinking, and the twain
Had drunk the bliss they ne'er should drink again :
And sleep that follows on the paths of joy,
Had spread his silken wings o'er maid and boy.
Inarmed they slumbered ; young-eyed stars of May
Across the narrow window gliding grey,
Gazed on their tranquil beauty : golden hair
Limb-long, with brown curls blending, wove a snare
Wherein both souls were prisoned, and their sighs
Breathed even in dreams of love that satisfies.
Then to the lattice, by the selfsame way
By which that lover in the death of day

Love-led had mounted, came the brothers three,
Led by no love but hate and treachery.
Silent and stealthy, in sheathed mail, they clomb,
And one by one within the little room
Alighted; nor for all that peril near,
Fell there the shadow of a coming fear
Across Imelda's dreaming heart, but deep
And still she breathed within the gates of sleep.
Nor Boniface beside her dreaming knew
By any shuddering of the soul or dew
Of horror on chilled brows, how gaunt and grim
Were those fierce hungry eyes that glared on him.
But as they sighed and smiled, the tremulous star
Of morn uprising from the Eastern bar
Of day's birth, shed dim light on them and made
More pure the peace wherein their souls were laid.—
Then spake the eldest brother: 'Shall we slay
A man's soul in the bloom and birth of May?
He is too fair; shall we not learn at length
That Love is stronger than Hate's strongest strength?'
Then spake the second: 'If to kill were wise,
'Twere wiser surely thus to take the prize,
And keep my lady's minion for a pledge,
Nor blunt with innocent blood the blameless edge
Of our good cause: for lo! this Boniface
Hath with the common folk such store of grace,
That slaying him we slay whate'er of right
Sustains us fearless in the people's sight.'
'Peace!' spake the youngest; and this single word,

Between set lips and clenched teeth hissing, stirred
The sanctity of silence like a snake
That coils scarce seen within the quivering brake.
Then from his broidered belt with sudden hand
He drew an ivory-sheathed bright-burnished brand,
Whereof the hilt was one huge agate wrought
Into shapes terrible surpassing thought;
Yea, and the blade envenomed had drunk dew
Distilled from Upas flowers and Indian yew.
This without further sign or word he drave
Into the sleeping man :—one groan he gave,
And from Imelda turned his head, and lay
Heavy and still beneath the twilight grey:
Nor did she wake, but turned with him, and laid
Her face upon his breast, and smiled, and said
In sleep fond inarticulate few words,
Like drowsy twitterings of half-wakened birds.
Then from the smitten corpse those brothers three
Withdrew the poisoned sword, and silently,
E'en as they came, with hungry hate assuaged,
Went forth; while dawn her winning battle waged
With darkness, and aloft the splendour flew
Of day into the cold irradiate blue.

Then 'neath the lattice on the garden green
A little page, the tulip rows between,
Went singing for mere joy to think that day

Had bloomed once more within the womb of May:
Carols he sang and snatches of old song,
Wherein the airy thoughts of music throng;
Nor knew he well whereof he sang, but glee
Flooded his soul, and life was melody:—

When thou wert born, O beaming star!
Three holy angels flew to earth;
And three kings from the east afar
Brought gold and jewels of great worth;
Three eagles on wings light as air
Bore the news East and West and North;
O jewel fair, O jewel rare,
So glad was heaven to greet thy birth!

Thus sang he; and his voice that rose and shrilled
Upon the ending of the stanza, thrilled
Imelda's ear; so that her honeyed slumber,
Like rose leaves over-bloomed, which dews encumber,
Or faint winds fret, fluttered and fell apart,
And in the golden sunlight her glad heart
Throbbed with quick life beneath her bosom's snow:
'Up, Boniface! my lover! dost thou know
That night is o'er, and men begin to tread
The city ways: I fear me day hath sped
Now a full hour: hearest thou not? Ah me!
Wilt thou not wake?'—Then seemed it suddenly
As though some sleep deeper than dreams were dull
On his closed lids and pale cheeks beautiful.—

She chafed his hands ; their palms were cold as death :
His mouth she kissed; no warm and delicate breath
Flew forth to greet her, and no smile delayed
Responsive kisses on those lips like lead.—
Breathless she rose, silent, ash-pale, her hair
Rippling around her moon-white shoulders fair :
With firm set teeth, with stony eyes she stood ;
And now she leaned, and now she knelt ; for blood,
Black, stealthy, slowly soaking, oozed and ran
Adown the marble bosom of the man.—
Then from his breast the linen shred by shred
She tore, and on his side and shoulder dead
She bent her ear and listened : tense and shrill
Beat her own heart, like crickets in the still
Of summer eves that madden ; but no sob
Of life that lingered, nay, no little throb
Of fluttering pulses whispered hope, for he
Lay stiff in death's insensibility.—
Then first she groaned : yea, then she shrieked ; and mad
With some fierce wish that made her spirit glad,
She fell upon her lord ; and first his mouth
She kissed as bees, what time the rainy South
Woos violet buds, kiss meadow flowers in May,
As though they ne'er might leave them ; then she lay
Limb-length beside him, with her arms enwreathed
His heavy waist, and pressed his wound, and breathed
Warm life upon its gory lips, and drank
The dews of Death thence-forth that dripped and sank.—
Ah me ! from those now quenchèd wells within

The frozen veins what hope had she to win
Fresh youth—or did she dream that she might bring
The breath back to his breast by whispering?—
Nay, not so: rather think that she was ware
How that the poison lurked and lingered there;
Yea, when with wild delirious haste she quaffed
That cup of blood, and stayed her lips, and laughed,
Then drank again, then laid her face down low
Beside her lord and waited, well I know
That she on Death was calling: 'Gentle Death,
For whom my widowed spirit wearieth,
Come quickly, dear, delicious Death, and bring
Solace eternal for my sorrowing!'
Nor was Death far, or heavy-eared, or slow
To send the last kind unconvulsive throe,
Whereby her spirit passed and was at rest
In the third sphere with him she loved the best.

So when three hours were sped, and now the sun
High o'er the city towers in splendour shone,
Those brothers conscious of the deed of sin
Chafed in their palace hall, seeking to win
Assurance from conjecture, marvelling how
Imelda in her bower were weeping now;
And much they feared to drag the comely dead
Forth to the square, or lay that golden head
Before the eyes of all their foes and all

The folk who loved him in his father's hall.
Then while they sat and spake and pondered sore,
Shrilling through chamber-roof and corridor
A shriek arose, and feet confused were heard
With arms that clashed, and many a windy word,
Tossed on the crests of tumult, caught their ears
In waifs and strays: 'Imelda!—Nay, she stirs!—
I say she stirs not—and slain Boniface!—
Dead like a dog for all his golden grace—
Nay, fellow, help!—What ho! go call the Lords!
Here by my faith is need for spears and swords!'
So shrilled torn voices: then the tramp of feet
Swifter and louder knelled; the arrowy sleet
Of vain complaint and querulous surprise
Surged closer; then before their wolfish eyes—
The door flung open and the palace hall
Flooded with frantic men from wall to wall—
Staggered the bearers of the piteous dead.
They to the dais came, and stood, and laid
Before his foes not Boniface alone,
But pale Imelda—pale with cold arms thrown
Still round her lover's waist, and lips where yet
The poison of the flower of Death was set.—
O ruddy mouth! O rose with kisses red!
O golden hair o'er breast and shoulder shed,
Like sunbright showers on snow ere day be dead!—
Nor space was now for question or debate:
Already rumour from the palace gate
Flew fire-mouthed through the city.—'Part the dead!'

Cried Nino Lambertazzi:—so they spread
Mantles of silk and rare brocades, with gems
Encased in gold upon their broidered hems,
Around Imelda; and for Boniface
They made a bier and bore him from the place
Breast-downward, covered with thick sable palls;
Nor did they take him to his father's halls,
But laid him in St. Dominic where slept
The Gieremei in their marble crypt.

There priests received the corpse, and trembling cried
'This man, though dead, the city will divide.'
Then did those holy men search limb by limb
To see if haply they might succour him;
And washed his wound that was so thin and slight,
And raised him in the merry morning light,
High on a bier 'twixt burning line and line
Of tapers flickering in the hot sunshine.
Naked his breast was that all eyes might see
Those livid lips above his heart, and be
Stirred to just wrath and righteous enmity.
Bare was his face and throat; rebellious hair
Nut-brown above his forehead clustered fair;
That men might seem to hear his mute mouth cry
On bloody vengeance from the indignant sky.
Morn wore to noon and noon to eve, while thick
Through all the aisles of stern St. Dominic

The people muttering gathered, and the kin
Of Gieremei mid the hollow din
Hung like a thunder-cloud apart; and barred
In steel above them Giano towered. His hard
Keen features from the visor gleamed like steel,
While on the calm cold corpse he gazed—one heel
Firm on the marble floor, the other stayed
Against the planks whereon the bier was laid.
Then, as the twilight thickened, fiery flared
On his set face the torchlight, glowed and glared
About his hauberk, kindled flames of hell
Within his tearless eyes and terrible;—
So that men whispered that some dreadful thing
The night or morrow's light would surely bring.

This while Imelda like an Eastern queen,
With velvet robes and jewels well beseen,
Her fair lids closed as if in sleep, her hair
With silken threads and pearl embroideries rare
Wrought by tirewomen, lay in solemn state
Amid the Lambertazzi. Their swollen hate
Ceased not, but grew and gathered, now that chance
Had burst the bonds of hollow sufferance.
Much clamoured they of vengeance; yea they spake
Aloud of wrong, and sware for honour's sake
To flesh keen swords on kith and kin of him,
Who with his philtres, charms, and teraphim

Had sown strange longing and desire unblest
In the pure garden of the maiden's breast.—
Thus Hate blaspheming Love's unblemished bliss,
Warped the fair truth to foul lies meaningless.

There too night came. With torches burning red
And sable stoles o'er helm and cuirass spread,
The Lambertazzi raised the bier, and through
The city streets went chanting; honey-dew
Dropped from spring-flowers and roses leaning o'er
Grey garden-walls of convents, while they bore
That marble maid with orient jewels bright
And silken splendour in the fierce torchlight:—
O crimson flames that turned the faint stars dim!—
While long resounding psalm and funeral hymn
From those deep-chested iron-throated men
Growled like hoarse thunder-rolls above the din
Of spurs on pavement clanking and clashed mail.—
I ween that night the love-lorn nightingale
Quaked voiceless.—Thus amid the surge and roar
Of Misereres and bells tolling o'er
The troubled city, the armed mourners came
To San Petronio. Robed in sullen flame
The murky aisles and arches, row by row,
Disclosed above them, as with hushed steps slow
Into the choir they marched, and mid the crowd
Of praying priests set the bier down, and bowed
Their brows revengeful. Then the mass on high
With book and bell was raised religiously—

So that it grew the Body of Very God,
Who took our flesh and cross-crowned Calvary trod ;
And on that Body 'twixt the gloom and glare
The kith and kin of slain Imelda sware
No second night should come, but blood should be
Spilled for her innocent sake abundantly.
Then to the crypted vault, the while priests sung,
And censers fraught with spice in cadence swung,
She who so loved that Love was strong as Death,
Sank slowly, as the sun that minisheth
His might at fall of eve, through ocean's floor
Sinks ; and her maiden sweetness never more
Was seen by man or woman ; but they bore,
Who watched her sinking thus from glare to gloom,
The sad sweet memory with them to the tomb.

Thus was Imelda buried ; and that night
Bologna rang through all her streets with might
Of armed men ; and for days and weeks the fray
Stayed not but swelled ; and years thereafter May
Returning saw new strife with old strife blent
In Hell-deep Heaven-wide interminglement.—
Wherefore my story well saith that the grace
Of fair Imelda and young Boniface
Wrought for their city wrong and sore distress.

LYRICS OF LIFE AND ART.

PART II.

FROM FRIEND TO FRIEND.

Dear friend, I know not if such days and nights
Of fervent comradeship as we have spent,
Or if twin minds with equal ardour bent
To search the world's unspeakable delights,
Or if long hours passed on Parnassian heights
Together in rapt interminglement
Of heart with heart on thought sublime intent,
Or if the spark of heaven-born fire that lights
Love in both breasts from boyhood, thus have wrought
Our spirits to communion; but I swear
That neither chance nor change nor time nor aught
That makes the future of our lives less fair,
Shall sunder us who once have breathed this air
Of soul-commingling friendship passion-fraught.

AN UNDERTONE.

If ye will raise me to the poet's throne,
And place me mid the minstrels in that shrine
Which hath no limit save the infinite zone
Of the sphered ether calm and crystalline,
Set on my brow no crown of stars, but twine
Spring's palest leaves and flowers, and let me be
Last and least felt of all that company.

Yea, seated on the lowest step of all,
Like some still singing child of Giambellin,
For whom the rays of living gold that fall
On saints and smiling babe and heavenly queen,
Are tempered into twilight, let me lean
My forehead on my hand, and muse, and stay
Lost in the lustre of their quenchless day.

Yet when we tire of greatness, when our eyes
Ache with the painter's vision, it may chance
That in the pictured melodist there lies
Some virtue to refresh our heart, some glance
From his mute musing forehead may entrance
The soul o'er-burdened with the stately thought
Which in those awful forms august is wrought.

So on my singing, when your spirits tire
  Of Dante's rapture, or your thrilling ear
Aches with the ecstasies of Milton's choir,
  Rest some brief minute; leave those heavens, and hear
  The little earthly music, faint yet clear;
I shall be blest, and ye shall bear away
Some frailest echo of my whispered lay.

And ye shall think of me perchance, when love
  Swells your strong hearts with life's deliciousness;
Yea, from the gloom my soul shall lean and move
  Toward you, and my lips your mouth shall press,
  And you shall feel my earnest eyes, and bless
The solitary singer who was fain
To weave weak rhymes that soothe and stir your pain.

Do not forget me! In the laurelled crowd
  That pace Fame's temple, I shall not be found;
Nor shall my quivering voice of song be loud
  Mid the rapt harmonies that rise and sound
  The lofty roof and ringing domes around;
But in the interval one note that's mine,
May make the sacred silence more divine.

IN WANDERSTUNDEN GESCHRIEBEN.

For those who fain would weep
Music shall summon sleep :
On dull watch-wasted eyes
Clear morning beams arise :
And night at length is sweet
To travel-weary feet :
But for the soul that hath no hope
Heavenward ascending summits slope,
And downward deep as Hell
Yawn gulfs immeasurable ;
Soaring or sinking, there is nought
But Death to stay the stress of thought.

THE BIRTH OF A STAR.

Within the voiceless confines of the void,
Where worlds begin to breathe, and Uriel spheres
The formless fruitage of chaotic years
Into fixed orbs that shall not be destroyed,

There dwells a planet. On the ocean buoyed
Of everduring darkness, from her peers
Sundered, and ringed around with calm, she hears
The symphony of stars, and unemployed

Sleeps on her shadow: till the Sun that fills
Heaven's concave, with a swift and sudden ray
Through all her slumbering rondure shooting, thrills

The bulk that indolently lifeless lay;
Then stung with quickening impulse toward the rills
Of light she rushes to roll on for aye.

THE DOOM OF THE SLOTHFUL.

When through the dolorous city of damned souls
The Florentine with Virgil took his way,
A dismal march they passed, whose fetid shoals
Held sinners by the myriad. Swollen and grey,
Like worms that fester in the foul decay
Of sweltering carrion, these bad spirits sank
Chin-deep in stagnant slime and ooze that stank.

Year after year for ever—year by year,
Through billions of the centuries that lie
Like specks of dust upon the dateless sphere
Of heaven's eternity, they cankering sigh
Between the black waves and the starless sky;
And daily dying have no hope to gain
By death or change or respite of their pain.

What was their crime, you ask? Nay, listen: 'We
Were sullen-sad what time we drank the light

And delicate air, that all day daintily
Is cheered by sunshine; for we bore black night
And murky smoke of sloth, in God's despite,
Within our barren souls, by discontent
From joy of all fair things and wholesome pent:

Therefore in this low Hell from jocund sight
And sound He bans us; and as there we grew
Pallid with idleness, so here a blight
Perpetual rots with slow-corroding dew
Our poisonous carcase, and a livid hue
Corpse-like o'erspreads these sodden limbs that take
And yield corruption to the loathly lake.'

ECHOES.

From Ennius.

HAIL, poet, who for mortal men dost pour
Strong wine of words that burn and sense that sears,
Drawn from thy bleeding bosom's fiery core,
And tempered with the bitter fount of tears.

From Cleanthes.

Lead thou me, God, Law, Reason, Duty, Life;
All names for thee alike are vain and hollow:
Lead me, for I will follow without strife,
Or if I strive, still must I blindly follow.

From Goethe.

That nought belongs to me I know
Save thoughts that never cease to flow
From founts that cannot perish,
And every fleeting shape of bliss
That kindly fortune lets me kiss
And in my bosom cherish.

From Heine.

Death is the cool dew-dropping night,
Life is the long day's blinding heat;
Mine eyelids droop, to sleep were sweet,
The long long day hath tired me quite.
Over my bed a linden springs;
There sits the nightingale of May;
She sings of only love alway;
In dreams I hear the song she sings.

YEARNINGS AFTER THE DESERT.

I WILL arise and go
Into the desert where no waters flow.
There have I dwelt
Ere now, and felt
The pulses of my mother sad and low.

Once more with woven camel's hair
Will I array my loins, and bare
My forehead to the whispering night air.
My food shall be
Locusts and honey of the wandering bee.

Lo, even as I speak,
The walls around me break!
Immeasurable sands arise:
The night of stars above the pathless plain
Greets yet again
With rapture and with radiance my accustomed eyes.

Who am I that so long
In Gadara I tarried?
Who am I that the song
To sweet flutes married
Of Meleager should have lured me,
And on sleepy shores immured me?

'Mid the laurels of Daphne I found
The feet of my love:
The woods of Orontes, around,
Beneath and above,
Were breathing with blossom and singing with sound.

But now, O my mother, I come
Back to thee, to thy home:
To the breasts that have nursed me I turn,
For the milk of thy bosom I yearn.

Why should I so long have listened to the throbbing of
that breast,
To that little wrist and forehead fluttering in a soft
unrest,
When my mother's mighty pulses, on the desert, in the
sky,
Timed their strong and firm vibrations to the cosmic
harmony?
O my mother! lo, I leave her, leave my love, and fly to
thee:
O my mother! wilt thou bless me as of old thou
blessed'st me?

Yet how shall I buy from the past
Oblivion of bliss?
And how on my soul shall be cast
No dream of her kiss?

Shall I murder the myriads of dreams—
The fountain that streams
With endless desire,
Shall I quench it and quell
The strength of the fire,
The fury of Hell?

No, child! upon the desert, when I pace
That sandy waste,
The burning blossom of thy longed-for face
Shall make me taste
Of grief the very bitterness and fierce disgrace.

Farewell; I go.
Thou tarriest. Yea, farewell!
Yet even so
'Tis well. Yea, fare thee well!

THE CAMERA OBSCURA.

INSIDE the skull the wakeful brain,
Attuned at birth to joy and pain,
Dwells for a lifetime; even as one
Who in a closed tower sees the sun
Cast faint-hued shadows, dim or clear,
Upon the darkened disc: now near,
Now far, they flit; while he, within,
Surveys the world he may not win:
Whate'er he sees, he notes; for nought
Escapes the net of living thought;
And what he notes, he tells again
To last and build the brains of men.
Shades are we; and of shades we weave
A trifling pleasant make-believe;
Then pass into the shadowy night,
Where formless shades blindfold the light.

PERSONALITY.

I.

I KNOW not what I am.—Oh dreadful thought !—
Nor know I what my fellow-creatures are :
Between me and the world without, a bar
Impalpable of adamant is wrought.
Each self, from its own self concealed, is caught
Thus in a cage of sense, sequestered far
From comradeship, calling as calleth star
To star across blank intermediate nought.
His own self no man sees, and none hath seen
His brother's self. Nay, lovers, though they sigh
'There is no room for ought to come between
'Our blended souls in this felicity,'
Starting from sleep, shall find a double screen
Built 'twixt two sundered selves—and both must die.

II.

Yea, both shall carry with them to the void
Without, the void more terrible within,
Tormented haply by the smart of sin,
And cursing what their wilful sense enjoyed.
Yet were they free to take or to avoid ?
Who knows !—Amid the dull chaotic din

Of wrangling schools which argument can win
Conviction, when blind faith hath been destroyed?
Freedom or servitude?—So fooled is man
By blind self-ignorance, he cannot say
If will alone beneath heaven's azure span
Its self-determined impulses obey;
Or if each impulse, wild as wind at play,
Be but a cog-wheel in the cosmic plan.

THE WILL.

Blame not the times in which we live,
Nor Fortune frail and fugitive;
Blame not thy parents, nor the rule
Of vice or wrong once learned at school;
But blame thyself, O man!

Although both heaven and earth combined
To mould thy flesh and form thy mind,
Though every thought, word, action, will,
Was framed by powers beyond thee, still
Thou art thyself, O man!

And self to take or leave is free,
Feeling its own sufficiency:
In spite of science, spite of fate,
The judge within thee soon or late
Will blame but thee, O man!

Say not, 'I would, but could not—He
'Should bear the blame, who fashioned me—
'Call you mere change of motive choice?'—
Scorning such pleas, the inner voice
Cries, 'Thine the deed, O man!'

ANTINOMIANISM.

O, LET me love my love and reason not!
Why bruise the flower before the fruit is set?
Why prune the bough while the green juices yet
Are shooting heavenward into leaf and knot?
What if the fruit be deadly? Let it be:
It is not thine but His who planted thee.
Nay, leave the flower to bloom, the rod to rise,
The fruit to form and ripen in the skies
Warmed with the light of God's unwearying eyes.

Be it enough for thee that thou dost shun
No blight He sends thee: when the whirlwinds bend
And break thy boughs and all thy blossoms rend,
Be patient: should the fierce life-draining sun
Strike heavy on thee, bear to feel thy bloom
Shrivelled: or in the damp unfruitful gloom
Show thy green leaves, and wait. The storms may rave;
Thy stem may sink fire-splintered; yet be brave;
What He hath sown and planted, He shall save.

BEATI ILLI.

Blest is the man whose heart and hands are pure !
He hath no sickness that he shall not cure,
No sorrow that he may not well endure :
His feet are steadfast and his hope is sure.

Oh, blest is he who ne'er hath sold his soul,
Whose will is perfect, and whose word is whole,
Who hath not paid to common sense the toll
Of self-disgrace, nor owned the world's control !

Through clouds and shadows of the darkest night
He will not lose a glimmering of the light,
Nor, though the sun of day be shrouded quite,
Swerve from the narrow path to left or right.

LEBENS PHILOSOPHIE.

If we were but free to wander
  Light as mountain cloud or air ;
If our love grew firmer, fonder,
  And our youth were always fair ;
If no thought of sin or scorning
Marred the magic of our morning
  If delight expelled despair :

If the dreadful hand of duty
Lay not on our souls like lead;
If the rose of joy and beauty
Had no thorn wherewith we bled;
If we could the world refashion
Closer to our own heart's passion,
And resuscitate the dead:

If all ifs were ours for ever;
If we held fate in our hand;
If without the least endeavour
We could do whate'er we planned;—
Tell us, dear ephemeral lovers,
Whom a little black earth covers,
Who at Pluto's footstool stand,

Tell us, could we bear the measure
Of a bliss beyond our sphere?
Without pain would there be pleasure,
Joy without or hope or fear?
Youth and beauty, could they thrall us
If old age did not appal us?
Could we love, if love were clear?

Life is nought for us, frail mortals,
But through death whereto we tend;
And we cross the heavenly portals
Only when on earth we bend;
Only what we lose, we cherish;
Only pluck the flowers that perish;
Only what we have not, spend.

This is wisdom: learn to grasp it:
Kiss the fickle hour that flies:
If a joy comes, do not clasp it:
Let the dream above thine eyes
Wave its wings in ether sailing:
So shalt thou dwell unbewailing
Till the sun that sets not, rise.

TAKE HEED AND BEWARE.

Nay, be not covetous! what though
Thou hunger not for land or gold,
High place among the great to hold,
Or famous through the crowd to go;
Yet art thou covetous, I know.

Thy greed is blent incurably
With the soul's life; for thou dost crave
To bathe in Beauty, wave by wave;
Nor wilt thou let one moment be
Cradled in wise passivity.

Much hast thou had; yet more and more
Thou fain wouldst win: the past is dust
Beneath those fevered feet of lust
That bear thee to a barren shore,
Pursuing still what flies before.

Thankless thou art, like one who fed
With meat and wine, cries Give ! Give ! Give
Peevish thou art, unlearned to live,
Lean, impotent, impatient, led
By lights of wandering passion bred

Fool that thou art ! the stable health
Begotten of a heart at rest,
The fervours of a tranquil breast,
Are not for thee, nor yet the wealth
That fills the sober mind by stealth.

Then be not covetous ! Although
The thirst that in thy bosom springs
For fair and honourable things,
Seem Virtue's self, yet even so
Thou art the slave of sin, I know.

A VISTA.

Sad heart, what will the future bring
To happier men when we are gone ?
What golden days shall dawn for them,
Transcending all we gaze upon ?

Will our long strife be laid at rest,
The warfare of our blind desires
Be merged in a perpetual peace,
And love illume but harmless fires?

Shall faith released from forms that chain
And freeze the spirit while we pray,
Expect with calm and ardent eyes
The morning of death's brighter day?—

These things shall be! A loftier race
Than e'er the world hath known, shall rise
With flame of freedom in their souls
And light of science in their eyes.

They shall be pure from fraud, and know
The names of priest and king no more;
For them no placeman's hand shall hold
The balances of peace and war.

They shall be gentle, brave, and strong,
To spill no drop of blood, but dare
All that may plant man's lordship firm
On earth and fire and sea and air.

Nation with nation, land with land,
Inarmed shall live as comrades free;
In every heart and brain shall throb
The pulse of one fraternity.

They shall be simple in their homes,
And splendid in their public ways,
Filling the mansions of the state
With music and with hymns of praise.

In aisles majestic, halls of pride,
Groves, gardens, baths, and galleries,
Manhood and youth and age shall meet
To grow by converse inly wise.

Woman shall be man's mate and peer
In all things strong and fair and good,
Still wearing on her brows the crown
Of sinless sacred motherhood.

High friendship, hitherto unknown,
Or by great poets half divined,
Shall burn, a steadfast star, within
The calm clear ether of the mind.

Man shall love man with heart as pure
And fervent as the young-eyed joys
Who chaunt their heavenly songs before
God's face with undiscordant noise.

New arts shall bloom of loftier mould,
And mightier music thrill the skies,
And every life shall be a song,
When all the earth is paradise.

There shall be no more sin, no shame,
Though pain and passion may not die;
For man shall be at one with God
In bonds of firm necessity.

These things—they are no dream—shall be
For happier men when we are gone:
Those golden days for them shall dawn,
Transcending aught we gaze upon.

THE

VALLEY OF VAIN DESIRES.

THE VALLEY OF VAIN DESIRES.

THERE lurks a chasm, embedded, deep and drear,
Ringed round with jags and ragged teeth sublime
Of heights Himâlyan ; where the hills uprear

Their hideous circuit to far snows, and climb
By barren cliff and scaur and splintered stair
Funereal. Never since the birth of time

Fell dew upon the valley-basement bare ;
Nor light of day direct, nor starry spear
Shot earthward ; but the opaque lurid air,

Unsunned and lustreless, like a salt mere,
Breeds exhalations. Here the craggy spines,
Converging from dim summits, build a bier,

Hollow and hateful, merging their sharp lines
In dismal flatness ; and the floor is scarred
With seams and furrows : withered roots of pines

Grapple the fleshless granite : pits are barred
With broken branches, age-old skeletons
Of what were trees : and, horror ! on the hard

Face of the grey stone skulls that grin, and bones
That bleach and wither in the windless gloom,
Dry-rot to dust by bleak battalions.

What hosts are these? Hounded by what fell doom,
Lured by what livid glamour, down the walls
Of this foul cauldron crept they? Doth the tomb

With plague-fierce phosphorescent festivals
Entice the languor of their dream-led feet?
Or sought they yon pale fruit that ripes and falls

From boughs aerial? Lo! how sickly sweet
The clammy spheres in clusters, green as dates,
As o'er-ripe plantains blue, in the faint heat

Fester upon that tree that glooms and grates
Scant twilight with lean branches! Far or nigh
In the whole circle of the hills no mates

Frown on its bulk mysterious; nor doth eye
Of dragon guard from pirate hands the fruit
Of its death-damned Hesperides; but dry

And doleful round the poison-fibred root
Spring agarics with fleshly shapes obscene.
Here never wheels the bat nor screech-owls hoot;

But all is silence; and no change is seen
Of noon or night, save when the shivering morn
Walks forth upon the silver-cinctured screen

Of unapproachable faint peaks forlorn
Far in the zenith, or an errant star
Haunts for awhile perchance some glimmering horn.

All winding ways, circling from near or far,
Dive to this centre ; and upon them all
Lie wrecks and ruins of remorseless war

Waged against life by one grim cannibal.—
What place is this, whereof in dreams the dread
Curdles my soul with spells tyrannical ?

Yea, but I dreamed : and lo ! my feet were led
Down the slow spirals of those deadly stairs :
And I too in my inmost spirit bred

Desire of that fell fruit ; and through the lairs
Of poison-fretted charnels crept, and came,
With quivering flesh and horror-stiffened hairs,

Beneath those dismal branches. There a flame
Burned blue about the blossoms ; and I stood,
And caught the falling juices ; and, though shame

Shook in my shivering pulse, I snuffed the lewd
Scent of those corpse-cold clusters ; and I fell
Amid the dying, dead, delirious brood,

Sweltering upon that altar-stone of Hell.—
What next my dream disclosed, in faltering speech
And feeble let my parched tongue strive to tell.

Far as these faint and swooning eyes could reach,
There, lying lapped in loathsomeness, I spied,
Coming and going, men who yearned; and each

Knew what his fellow's thin and shuddering side
Concealed of heart-ache, and of fear, and fire—
Of fierce forth-stretchings after joys denied,

And horrible, unquenchable desire.
Each forehead throbbed with fever; and each eye,
Gleaming 'neath hollow temples, seemed a pyre

For some slow flame to feed on. Silently
They stole adown the craggy stairs, and strained
Lean hands toward the branches: loathingly,

Yet with a terrible strange longing, gained
The gangrened fruit, and ate, and, as they chewed,
Pain that was pleasure filled them. Then they waned

Even where they stayed; for that fierce poison brewed
Despair within their spirit. Yet, once more,
Athirst they rose and ate; till lassitude

Of what the soul loathes and the veins abhor,
Possessed them, and they perished, and dust grew
Year after year upon the granite floor.

O ye, whoe'er ye are, that never knew
The achings of the ague fits of sin!
Who never from foul founts delusive drew

Flesh-parching poison ; nor leaped lively in
With open eyes, where lakes of molten brass
Made a delirious mirage, and the green

Margent of crusted bronze-rust fairer was
To your strained senses than all delicate
Dim tresses of the swaying summer grass !—

How can I teach you by what fearful fate
Foredoomed, dogged downward by what pangs, enticed
By what pale cravings, lured alike by hate

And love, these guilty things, of God despised,
Of man rejected, moaning crept beneath
The treacherous tree, and fed, and cursing Christ,

Dragged the slow torture of plague-stricken breath
Onward through days or weeks or months or years
To fade at last in horror-shrouded death ?

Yet such my dream was : and no gentle tears
Assuaged its anguish : for the founts were quenched
Of pity by strange loathing and wild fears.

I saw—yea, even now my cheeks are blenched
With thinking of the sorrow of that sight—
A youth Phœbean, whose fair brows, entrenched

With scars untimely, bore the branded blight
Of shame 'neath withered bay-leaves : his long hair,
Once crisped in curls that mocked the morning light

For lustre, clung dishevelled, sere and rare,
Around his shuddering shoulders : as he ran,
His feet upon the grisly granite stair

Dropped dew, wherewith the dusk obsidian
Blushed into bloodstone ; and so pure and fine
Was that fierce chrism that, methought, flowers wan

Struggled to spring therefrom, but straight did pine,
Seeing that nought with life in it might linger
Beneath those scathing branches serpentine.

A broken lute he held, with crazy finger
Fumbling the voiceless chords ; and ever sighed
His inarticulate throat, as though some singer

Divine, Olympian, on his lips had died.—
What woe was mine to feel that loveliness
Stretched in the leprous desert by my side !

To know that tender bosoms longed to press
Those delicate limbs, wherein the life decayed !
That maiden lips, mid the forsaken bliss

Of peaceful homes, might yesternight have laid
Pure cooling kisses on those cheeks whereon
Now fed the poison of the fearful glade !

Let one tale speak for all !—the Upas shone
Above his glistening eyeballs ; and its scent
Stank in his nostrils like the carrion

Mid jasmines festering by some Indian tent ;
So that he loathed and loved it. Then he ate.
Sleep swallowed shame. But oh ! the ravishment

Of that next waking, ere his eyes were set
To scan the horrors of the hopeless vale !—
Beneath his feet thick grass spread dewy wet

(So fancy fooled him) in a pleasant dale ;
And he, a boy, uprising, fain would go
Forth to green crofts of golden galingale,

Daylong to muse and watch the murmuring flow
Of alder-shaded streams—Ah God !—Alas!—
Tigerlike on his soul the sudden woe

Leapt in one moment of the awful place ;
And rising—as Eve rose, what time she broke
The fatal bough—upon his shrivelled face

The fire of Never, Nevermore ! awoke
Thenceforth to feed undying. Then he turned
Breast-downward, smitten with sharp throes that shook

The putrid air. Nathless keen fever burned
Yet in his veins : then he would crawl and lean
Weak limbs against the trunk :—at times he spurned,

At times he clutched the mellow fruit that green
And rank bent downward to his panting lip ;
And ever and anon the heavens serene

Disclosed above his eyes ; and stars would slip
Through the clear azure on the edge of snow;
Or dawning's tremulous pure fingertip

Of rose would glide along the horns, or glow
A little downward, ever out of reach,
Delusive, taunting him midmost his woe.

Sweet thoughts swam through him of the leafy beech
Broad by his father's houseroof, where he played,
Or spread at eventide with plum and peach

The rustic board, a free child, ere sin laid
Her loathly finger on his luminous hair.
In dreams the angel of that old life made

Music most eloquent, till all things fair
Once more bloomed round him; yet he might not seize
The blossom of their beauty: for despair

Shrivelled his spirit with foul phantasies :
And this of all his torment was the worst,
That knowing purity and joy and peace,

He might not even yearn for them, accurst
With the one hunger of the hideous tree.—
Thus in my dream I watched that devilish thirst

Consume and rot and wreck him utterly,
Till he too perished. In what dark abyss
Of Thy deep counsel dwells the black decree

Whereby, O God, such shapes of blessedness
Must sink beneath the scurf and barren spume
Of lust unlovely, loathed and lustreless?

Even as I wailed and wrung wild hands, the gloom
Lightened, and lo! around me like thin flowers
Of clouds that on the brows of sunset bloom,

Blazed angel choirs innumerous—Thrones and Powers,
Princes, Archangels, flame-tongued Seraphim,
Shrilling through all their cohort: He is ours!

Then gazing on the ash-white corse of him
Who erewhile sank soul-smitten by fierce pain,
I saw a little dust, pure, white, and dim;

Kind earth's true substance. But amid that train
Flamed one intense keen orb of living light,
That throbbed and shouted; and the purple grain

Of heaven grew pale around it—with such white
Wild radiance pierced its splendour through and through
The fabric of God's infinite delight.

Therewith the love within my spirit drew
Me upward with those angels; yea, I went,
Last of their choir, through fields of trackless blue:

For faith and hope and yearning in me lent
Wings to my weakness; and I heard the singer,
Divine, Olympian, in free ravishment

Flood the waste skies with living strains, that linger
Yet in these tingling ears and eager heart.
No more about his lute the restless finger

Strayed; for he needed neither hand nor art
Nor voice nor throat, since joy alone and life
Made music through his lustre. Yea, the smart

Of that past passion and all its sinful strife
Bloomed into bliss triumphant. Then I turned
My gaze 'mid stars, wherewith the way was rife,

Downward, and lo! a little spark that burned,
Serenely stationed amid sister spheres:
And is that Earth? my wistful spirit yearned:

Yea, Earth it is; but here where neither years,
Nor place, nor change, nor forms are, but all's One—
One light, one joy, one life,—thy world appears

E'en what she is, pure splendour! There was none
In all that luminous band, but flamed and shed
Smiles like the arrows of the orient sun,

While from the singer's soul the new lore sped
Striking my dizzied senses. Then—for now
The tents of very heaven disclosed o'erhead,

And scathing glory smote my aching brow—
Sleep fell apart, and waking I was ware
How that above me in the golden glow

Of dawning all the Alpine summits fair,
Unbarred of midnight blackness, row by row
Blazed in the brilliance of the August air.

Yea, Lord ! one thing alone of truth we know—
That Thou art good and gracious ! Could but we
Behold the rivers of Thy wisdom flow

From the first fount of Thy felicity,
Through all the ocean where those myriad streams
Commingle, 'twere an easy task to see
Concord above the discord of our dreams.

NOTES.

NOTES.

Note 1, Page 9.

Forget me never.

Suggested by an anonymous epigram in the Greek Anthology, bk. vii. 346.

Note 2, Page 35.

Leuké.

1. This description of the fabled island of Leuké is from Arrian, who tells the story of the sea-birds. 2. The dream blent Arrian's Leuké with a winter sunset in the high Alps, a well-known study by Flandrin, and a voyage in an open boat from Amalfi to Capri.

Note 3, Page 45.

An Improvisation.

Suggested by the records of Beethoven's deafness.

Note 4, Page 51.

Hesperus and Hymenæus.

The first few lines are taken from a fragment of Bion. The Idyll repeats a legend told by Servius in his Virgilian Commentary.

NOTE 5, PAGE 57.

The Feet of the Beloved.

Modelled upon one of Philostratus' Epistles.

NOTE 6, PAGE 57.

From Maximus Tyrius.

These thoughts occur in a Dialogue by Maximus on Love.

NOTE 7, PAGE 59.

An Episode.

An attempt to treat the incident of Socrates' meeting with Phædo.

NOTE 8, PAGE 60.

To Rhodocleia.

Suggested by several of Meleager's epigrams.

NOTE 9, PAGE 60.

At Diocles' Tomb.

See the Scholia to Theocritus, Idyll XII.

NOTE 10, PAGE 62.

The Sacrifice.

The tale of Cratinus and Aristodemus has been told at length by me in *Many Moods.*

NOTE 11, PAGE 63.

Art is Love.

I need hardly acknowledge the obligation of this poem to the myth of the Birth of Love in Plato's *Symposium*.

NOTE 12, PAGE 67.

Martyrdom.

See Anth. Pal. xii. 132.

NOTE 13, PAGE 69.

Pantarkes.

Pausanias says that one of the subordinate figures placed, as Victory, beneath the knees of the chryselephantine statue of Zeus, was the portrait of Pantarkes, a youth of Elis beloved by Pheidias.

NOTE 14, PAGE 77.

The Love Tale of Odatis.

This legend, derived probably from some ancient Arabian Nights story-book and Hellenized, is reported from the Histories of Chares the Mitylenean by Athenæus in bk. xiii. ch. 35 of his *Deipnosophistæ*.

NOTE 15, PAGE 148.

The Cappuzin.

A part of the Rosegg glacier opposite Pontresina has this name, because the rocks emergent from the snow form the image of a monk's face, gigantic and lifeless, which, once recognised, will never afterwards be forgotten.

Note 16, Page 187.

Imelda Lambertazzi.

This story occurs in the mediæval annals of Bologna. Like that of Romeo and Juliet and others of the same date, it connects the political discords of the Guelfs and Ghibellines with a legend of unhappy love. The incident of Imelda's dying by drinking the poisoned blood of her lover's wound, is told by the Chronicler.

Note 17, Page 213.

The Doom of the Slothful.

See Dante, *Inferno*, canto vii.

Note 18, Page 231.

The Valley of Vain Desires.

This is an attempt to describe by way of allegory the attraction of vice that 'fascinates and is intolerable,' with its punishment of spiritual extinction or madness in this life. I have often doubted whether the nightmare horror which I tried to adumbrate, is a fit subject for poetic treatment. I content myself, however, by reflecting that the sense or the presentiment of sin, when sternly realised, involves this horror, and that, as it is a frequent phase of spiritual experience, we are not bound to shrink from even its most poignant presentation.

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